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The BLACK CAT

A Short Story Magazine

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The Black Cat

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and have many acquaintances and friends, and would like to turn your spare time into money, and have $25.00 to start you out, you will be interested in our proposition.

THE BLACK CAT, Salem, **Mass.**

A Five by Seven Talk With the Editor

To Readers:

It is admitted THE BLACK CAT is not a big magazine in the matter of pages. Quality estimated upon that basis would create a false standard.

THE BLACK CAT is big in another way, big because it specializes in the short story instead of concentrating its essence in a novelette and achieving nothing more than neutral tints with the remainder of its contents.

It is the original short story magazine. Each number contains not one but nine complete stories—stories that have zip and zest, piquancy and punch and leave a pleasant afterglow.

The average reader doesn't have the time to read long stories, stories that run to twenty and thirty thousand words. Then again, few stories have the strength of plot and characterization which will warrant such length. In that respect THE BLACK CAT story has the advantage. It gives more satisfaction because it concentrates. That is why THE BLACK CAT eschews the novelette, thinly vamped with vapid, tasteless stories which generally feature *double entente*.

In the final analysis, THE BLACK CAT has just the size and strength of a demi tasse. It is just the magazine for the commuter, making at the same time a distinct appeal to the commuter's family. It is the demi tasse of the all-fiction magazines.

The editor would be pleased to receive the opinions of BLACK CAT readers. Write and tell him what stories and what authors you like and why you like them. Tell him what kind of stories you would like to see in THE BLACK CAT. And if you have a story in your system that you think you could write don't hesitate to try. The editor welcomes stories from unknown writers.

To Writers:

THE BLACK CAT wants stories averaging from 2,000 to 3,500 words, stories that are spicy, with a style that is light rather than ponderous.

You may get an accurate idea of THE BLACK CAT type of story by reading THE THRILLER, a magazine containing thirty-six complete stories, now on all News Stands. Here are some of the titles: "Quilligan and the Magic Coin," "Told in Minor," "The Roundabout Road," "The Rattler," "Jilting Parmelia," "Tea—With a Wink," "John Jones's Dollar," "The Backsliding of Unc' Bad-Eye Johnson."

THE TRAP

BY WILSON CLAY MISSIMER

A detective tries to "frame" a crook, whom he cannot convict legitimately.

COLE CHATAINE walked into Doctor Stacey's consulting room.

"Ah, Mr. Chataine, we meet again," Doctor Stacey smiled, holding out his hand. "I hope your mission is more pleasant than the last in which we met."

Chataine raised his piercing black eyes and smiled. "Far more pleasant," he said. He sat down. "I have come, Doctor, to ask your aid."

"Indeed." Stacey watched him sharply.

"Doctor, you are a member of the Mohaning Club?" Chataine began.

Doctor Stacey nodded.

"Do you know Rogers H. Harrison, the millionaire?"

"I do."

"Then you can help me. Every Saturday evening Rogers H. Harrison spends his time at the club—usually gets very much under the influence of liquor. By one o'clock he is generally in such a condition that he has to be taken home. Will you, Doctor, as a favor to me, be at the Mohaning Club Saturday evening and will you, please, escort Rogers H. Harrison not home, but to these apartments of yours where I will be waiting for you."

Doctor Stacey's brows lowered and his eyes for a second seemed to bore through the detective. Chataine went on. "When we have Mr. Harrison here, you can take his keys, Doctor, and perform another little favor for me." Chataine rubbed his hands together craftily. "A certain woman in this city, some years ago, carried on an indiscreet flirtation with this man, Harrison. She wrote him some letters and now wants them back. These letters are kept in Harrison's own room, on the second floor of his mansion and are secreted in a desk there. Now, Doctor, you can aid me immensely. Take Harrison's latch key, let yourself into his house, go to his room and bring me those letters. They are in a packet, written on blue paper. Apprehension is very unlikely. Harrison's wife and daughters are abroad and the house is nearly depleted of servants. The thing's dead easy. For your trouble I will pay you a thousand dollars—a portion of the amount I am to receive for rendering this service to this lady."

"But why, Chataine—" Doctor Stacey began and then stopped suddenly. His brows came together in a straight line. He began drumming on his desk with his fingers.

His expression at that moment was a study. It may have told everything or nothing. Certainly the faintest shadow of a smile played about his thin lips. Twice he flashed his handsome eyes upon Chataine as though he might have represented some enigma.

"All of which, Chataine, is rather queer, is it not?"

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"Granted, my dear Doctor," Chataine smiled. "Yet the service you may render will be stupendous."

"No doubt. I'll think it over, Chataine. Entering other men's houses at dead of night is not in my line. I am a physician. Just why, Chataine, do you come to me for this—ah—service?"

"First, because you are a member of the Mohaning Club; second, because you are a physician and as such are capable of administering some potion to Harrison when you get him here that will insure his total unconsciousness as long as we may desire it."

"Very good. And the letters are—"

"In Harrison's sleeping apartments, second floor, the front room on the right of the hall. I will procure a flash for you—and say, a pistol—in case something goes wrong you could bluff your way out. Eh, what do you say?"

Stacey mused. Inwardly, he was both laughing and boiling. Outwardly, he was calm and cool.

"The desk may be locked."

"In which case you open it. Remember, you will have Mr. Harrison's bunch of keys."

"To be sure; I quite forgot," Stacey smiled. He frowned and appeared to be thinking over some new turn.

"By the way, Chataine, could not a servant do this little trick for you? They can be bribed to do almost anything."

"Servants talk, Doctor. Here we must have the utmost secrecy."

"Quite true. While I am on my mission to the house, you will stay here with Harrison—is that the scheme?"

"Exactly. He may come to—your man may discover him—a hundred incidents could occur."

"Quite true," the doctor acquiesced. "So the game is, I am to go to the Mohaning Club, attach myself to the crowd which Mr. Harrison is patronizing and when he gets heavily intoxicated I am to offer my services to him as an escort and take him here—instead of to his house. That right?"

"Exactly."

"Then I am to leave him here with you, take his keys, repair to his mansion, get the letters and return to you."

"And both of us will conduct Mr. Harrison home and put him into his house. Yes, sir."

"I see. Chataine, as a favor to you, I'll do it. It smacks of adventure." They shook hands and consumed ten or fifteen minutes discussing details.

When Chataine had gone and Doctor Stacey was once more alone, he sat down at his desk and laughed.

"What a great brainless fool Chataine is," he mused. "My dear Doctor Stacey," he continued, addressing himself, "do you see the trap? Ecole Chataine, French criminologist, has traced my career. He knows I am the gentleman who has been preying upon the fraudulent rich, who has been relieving them of their superfluous wealth in the way of jewels; he is sure—he knows, but he lacks that one all-important thing, evidence. So he prepares a trap for me. At the Harrison mansion I will be apprehended in the act of searching the millionaire's desk and I will be taken into custody and imprisoned. Thus, without evidence from my former career, he incarcer-

ates me. Clever,—clever, but weak, damnably weak. Why Chataine, you brainless fool, can't you see the paper walls in your plan? When I bring Mr. Rogers H. Harrison here, why should *I* repair to Harrison's house and get the letters? Why cannot you, Chataine, go? There, my dear detective, is where you gave yourself away. And yet, Chataine, I am going to do it —merely to teach you a lesson. Let me see. What says the Scripture: 'The pit he has digged for others he has fallen into himself.' How droll that will be, Chataine."

He rose to his full height. "So you would imprison me, hey? All right. Look well to yourself—for out of this trap you have prepared, Chataine, will come trouble for you."

Saturday evening at nine o'clock Doctor Stacey entered the Mohaning Club. It was a wonderful club, the most exclusive in the city. The place was tolerably well occupied with members. Stacey walked casually through room after room, nodding, bowing, pausing to exchange a word here, there. In a card room on the second floor he came across Rogers H. Harrison, the millionaire, playing auction.

Harrison was a large man of aristocratic bearing. He had grey hair, blue eyes, a firm, thin-lipped mouth and square chin.

He, himself, beckoned to Stacey.

"Doctor—good evening. We need a fourth at auction. Will you play?"

Stacey's eyes met those of the millionaire in a searching stare; there was nothing suspicious in his action. Stacey studied him quickly in those few seconds. Certainly, if this man of money was in on the deal, he was not betraying the fact. Yet in an hour's time Stacey decided he *was* in on it—knew of the plot afoot to catch a thief. He could imagine the species of story Chataine had fabricated for the gentleman. Without doubt, the detective had averred that information of an intended robbery had fallen into his hands and he had instructed Harrison on a plan of procedure without telling whom he suspected. Stacey was sure of this last point. Certainly, if Harrison suspected that he was this wonderful gentleman burglar who had made a reputation throughout the town, he would have undoubtedly betrayed it in some way.

Stacey noted before play had been on an hour that Harrison was not imbibing with his usual unslakable thirst, and it was to the doctor's advantage to see that the millionaire was as far "under the weather" as possible. So he himself began to urge that worthy gentleman who, after attempting to drink conservatively, broke entirely. By twelve o'clock he was a useless hand at auction and was escorted to an arm chair in a corner, where he dozed heavily.

Doctor Stacey had informed Chataine that he would return with his charge at one A. M. Now at twelve-ten, he arose and announced to the other gentlemen that he'd see Mr. Harrison safely home. At twelve-fifteen, he and Harrison, arm-in-arm, left the club.

The Harrison mansion was but a stone's throw from the club house and Doctor Stacey and his almost helpless friend covered the distance in almost ten minutes. Stacey smiled and chuckled to himself. "Before we re-

turn to you, Chataine, we will *first* make a visit to the Harrison mansion. This, my dear Chataine, is where we begin to outwit you." Thus the doctor mused.

The Harrison mansion loomed dark and forbidding in the darkness of the night, some distance back from the street. Doctor Stacey secured the millionaire's keys and helped the drowsy Harrison to a chair on the veranda and left him.

Doctor Stacey approached the door and examined the lock. He chuckled. He selected a key from the millionaire's ring and inserted it. The lock yielded. The doctor removed the key and produced a bunch of his own. He tried key after key, finally finding one that fitted. Again he chuckled. Noiselessly he entered.

Somewhere on the second floor, alert, watching, listening, was Chataine's accomplice, waiting. But Doctor Stacey did not go to the second floor. He proceeded noiselessly down the hall and entered a room.

Here, for just a second, the doctor switched on his pocket flash. The place was a sort of study and against the wall stood a safe. Instantly the doctor shut off his flash. He stepped to the safe, bent down, placed his ear close to the combination and with his fingers began turning the disk.

He worked slowly, painstakingly. He was listening to the falling of the lock's tumblers. When one dropped into place he reversed the disk and turned slowly. It was tedious work, but the doctor knew his business. He understood combination locks as well as the men who invented them. Slowly he turned the disk, forward then backward. At last he heard the bolts shoot. He pulled open the doors and grinned in the dark.

Again, for just a few seconds, he used his flash. Account books, documents and papers, were arranged neatly in several separate pigeon holes. A small closed compartment the doctor pried open with a small jimmy. Here he found some jewels which he quickly pocketed. Several brooches, a pearl necklace, and trinkets of lesser importance comprised the selection.

The doctor pulled out books, papers, documents, and scattered them on the floor. Then, leaving the safe door open, he retreated. He reached the front door, opened it and found the millionaire Harrison as he had left him, dozing in his chair. He got him to his feet and helped him from the veranda. In twenty minutes they arrived at the doctor's office. It was just one A. M.

As Doctor Stacey and his charge turned into the walk leading to the office doors, a man stepped out of the shadows and held a whispered conversation with the doctor.

"He's there—waiting," he told Doctor Stacey. "I've kept a good watch, sir. He searched your desk twice and even wandered into the library and living room."

"You have all arrangements made?"

"Yes, sir. Taxi is ready now, sir, just around the corner. Martin is driving. He knows how to hold his tongue, sir."

Doctor Stacey handed the man a key. "To the front door," he whispered, "and be quick. Walk back, returning by way of Stevens Street and when you pass me, whistle a

snatch of a song—as a signal that all is well. If you do not whistle I will know something has gone wrong."

"Yes, sir. Anything else, sir?"

"Just this. As soon as I and the gentleman now inside the office, leave, get to work. Lose no time. You can handle this man easily. See, he is just about helpless." The stranger glanced at Harrison. The millionaire apparently was in a stupor. "That is all," Doctor Stacey said and the man disappeared into the darkness.

Doctor Stacey, his arm through Harrison's, mounted the steps and with his key opened his office door. Chataine was awaiting him.

"Ah—well done, Doctor—you have him," Chataine bubbled.

Stacey smiled. He dragged his man into his consulting room and laid him on a couch.

"And now, Doctor," said Chataine, "we must lose no time. See, I have brought you a flash and a pistol." He pointed to both articles lying on Doctor Stacey's desk.

Stacey smiled sardonically. "These things, Chataine," pointing to the gun and flash, "are for you."

"Me?"

"Exactly. You, Chataine, and not I, are going for the letters."

The doctor smiled at Chataine's confusion. Chataine stared, his mouth agape, his small, piercing, black eyes open wide.

"Why, Doctor—I tell you it's impossible."

"Nonsense."

"I must stay here with—with Mr. Harrison."

"Mr. Harrison won't move for two hours. He's too far gone. Come, Chataine, this is in your line, not mine. We'll go together to the Harrison mansion, but you get the letters."

"I tell you—"

"Tell me nothing. You are a detective, yet you ask me to enter this house. Supposing something goes wrong and I am caught?"

"I am here to vindicate you."

"Possibly; but you get the letters. Come along. Harrison will be safe." He pulled Chataine by the arm. "Take your equipment there, Mr. Chataine." Doctor Stacey handed the detective the flash and gun. Reluctantly Chataine pocketed them, and followed the doctor from the house.

They walked slowly, arguing heatedly. Doctor Stacey had his arm linked through the detective's. He smiled continually in the darkness. Chataine was stubborn and in a vile temper. He accused the doctor of going back on his promise. He manufactured excuses as to why Stacey and not himself should enter the house, but Doctor Stacey merely shrugged his shoulders and laughed a low laugh which made Chataine ill at ease.

They walked slowly, because Chataine, who had advised haste, did not seem inclined to go fast. A taxicab whizzed by them. Doctor Stacey noted it, a smile spreading over his features. He tightened his grip on Chataine's arm.

"My dear Chataine, you are in a vile temper," Doctor Stacey teased. "Really, by the way you carry on, one would think you had prepared some sort of a trap for me; your actions certainly are suspicious."

This had its effect. Chataine calmed noticeably. He now appeared quite

good-humored, a change which amused the doctor. When presently a young man sauntered by whistling a snatch of a song, Chataine really laughed. "A happy fellow for one coming home at one A. M., hey, Doctor?"

"Very happy," replied the doctor.

They arrived at the Harrison mansion. Here Chataine made a last stand.

"I'll stay outside and be the lookout, and you—"

"You go for the letters and I stay outside," Stacey laughed. "Here are the keys." He handed them to the detective. "I'll take you to the door."

Stacey took up a position near the steps while Chataine approached the door. The detective fumbled with the keys. At last the door opened. Chataine entered. The door closed.

Doctor Stacey turned and sped away through the darkness. He went down the street like a madman. At the corner he found a policeman and dashed up to him.

"A burglar, officer—I think it's the one who has been terrorizing the town for the past year—at the Harrisons'. I am Doctor Stacey. I just took Mr. Harrison home from the club; he was a bit under; I got him into the house. As I was leaving the grounds I saw a man, short, undersized, enter them. I followed him. He tried some keys at the front door and entered. He's in there now."

The policeman blew a whistle. In five minutes he was joined by three other officers. Stacey led them to the house.

They left one policeman outside to guard the rear of the mansion. The other three, with Stacey, forced the front door and entered.

Inside, the officers used their flashes. They went down the hall, Doctor Stacey in the lead. They came to a wide flight of stairs and descending were Chataine and a woman.

"Here he is," Stacey yelled. "This is the fellow. See, he has an accomplice with him."

Chataine stared. So did the woman, his companion.

The policemen grabbed them and amid wild expostulations they were handcuffed.

Chataine stared at Doctor Stacey. The officers were hustling their prisoners along when Doctor Stacey stopped them. "Don't be in a hurry, officers. Let us hear what this fellow has to say."

"Say! *You* are the thief. I tell you, officers, you are making a grave mistake. I am Ecole Chataine, the detective. Pull back my coat and you will see my badge." One of the officers complied. The badge was there. The policemen stared.

"And I am Ella Avery, of the Burns agency," the woman said sharply. "Here is my badge." She raised her handcuffed hands and fumbling in her blouse produced her badge.

"We demand our release," Chataine said curtly.

"Remember, officers," Doctor Stacey warned, "the cleverest robbery ever committed in New York was committed by a detective, a man right on the force."

"Officers, release us, or it will go hard with you," Chataine snapped.

The officers stared perplexedly.

"Why, if you are detectives are you here?" asked one.

"Why not search a room or two,"

Stacey suggested. "See if everything is O. K."

"Search a room!" Chataine bellowed. "I tell you, officers, this man is the thief who has been playing the devil here in this town. Why, at this very instant he has Mr. Harrison, drunk, in his rooms on Stevens Street and he was coming here to rob the house. That's why we're here; we were waiting to surprise him. He must have seen us enter and summoned you to play a little game."

"Officers," Doctor Stacey drawled, "this man is very clever with his tongue. As for Mr. Harrison, not twenty minutes ago I brought him home from the club, helped him into the house and laid him out on a davenport in the lower front room where he should be at this instant. You can, of course, release these people if you see fit—but if I were you I should make sure."

One officer turned to the other two. "Search the place," he commanded.

They entered the nearest room, and were gone but a second. "The safe door is open," they announced excitedly, "and papers and books are strewn over the floor."

Stacey smiled. Chataine stared wild-eyed. Ella Avery was looking at Doctor Stacey as though to read his innermost thoughts.

"And now, officers, since you find this bit of tell-tale evidence would it not be policy to search the prisoners?"

"We do that at the station," one of the policeman explained.

"But for curiosity's sake—"

One of the officers stepped up to Chataine and went through his clothes. He brought forth the keys, the flash, two pistols, and from a side pocket, he produced a pearl necklace, brooches, and some jewelry of lesser importance.

Chataine stared stupidly. Finally he looked Doctor Stacey in the face. Doctor Stacey was calm and cool.

"Rather odd, officers," Doctor Stacey drawled tantalizingly, "is it not? He's caught with the goods, yet he tells a strange tale. And what was that, my dear detective, about my having Mr. Harrison locked in my rooms on Stevens Street? I am interested in that remark for the simple reason that I put Mr. Harrison into the room at the end of this hall not twenty-five minutes ago. Come, let us see."

They started down the hall and had not proceeded far before they were joined by two wildly gasping men-servants. Doctor Stacey accosted one of them. "Is Mr. Harrison's valet here?"

"I am his man, sir; thank you, sir," he replied with a slight English accent.

"Will you then, please open this door and switch on the lights. I just brought your master home from the club."

"Thank you, sir—yes, sir."

He threw the door open and switched on the lights. There, on a davenport lay Harrison, in a drunken stupor.

"This is your master, Mr. Harrison?" Doctor Stacey inquired.

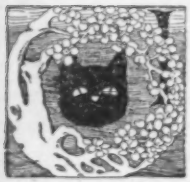
"Yes, sir."

Doctor Stacey turned to Chataine. "Here, my strange fellow, is Mr. Harrison. It is plain he cannot be two places at the same time. You play a deep game, you do, posing as a detective—but, oh, well,—officers, have a cigar." He produced a silver case and passed it around.

THE POULTRY LADIES OF VALLEY ROAD

BY WALTER A. DYER

A juicy little story that illustrates the importance of loving your neighbor's dog and keeping your hens out of his winter rye.



KNEW as soon as I reached Ben Packard's place that Jim Richards was plowing. Jim isn't profane like some I might mention, but he is the most vociferous plowman I have ever known. Native inventiveness has furnished him with a line of soft-drink expletives and epithets that early won my sincere admiration, and he can plow his two acres a day by sheer vocal energy. As I topped the hill he was informing the whole Valley Road and part of West Pelton that his off mare was a lazy, stiff-hipped giraffe without sense enough to know a clod from a boulder.

He was at work on his northeast meadow, and as I drew near, Carlo ran out to speak to me. Carlo is a good dog and a friend of mine, though reserving all intimacy for the members of his own household. Like most of the dogs about Pelton he is mostly collie, with enough irregularity in conformation and markings to save him from the dangers of the bench show. Carlo approached with his head up and his ears cocked, allowing me to pat him once on the head, and then went sniffing and sneezing about the stone wall.

I scrambled over and accosted Jim.

"Corn here?" I ventured.

"Nope," said Jim, stopping his team with a "Ho!" that made the alders quiver by the roadside. "Goin' to reseed. Medder's gettin' run down."

"Going to let her lie fallow this winter?" I inquired.

"Nope," said Jim. "I'll put her down to rye, I expect, and foller with buckwheat in the spring. Then she'll be in good shape to seed down next fall."

I nodded approvingly. "Better put in a little vetch with the rye," I suggested.

"Seed costs too blame much," he replied laconically.

We spoke about the weather, and about his heifer that had been ailing, and about Mrs. Bailey's funeral, and then I asked him for the news.

"Got some new neighbors," said Jim.

"Somebody got the old Greene place?"

"Yep."

"You don't look pleased about it," said I.

"I ain't," said Jim. "Couple of fool women think they're goin' to make a fortune out of chickens. I give 'em just two years, if they've got the means to hang on that long."

"That won't hurt you any, will it?" I asked.

"Nope," said Jim, dropping the

reins over his head again, "if they don't come around botherin' the life out of me with questions and tryin' to borrer everything I've got. I know the kind. Getap, Jess. Wake up there, Jo. 'D yer think you'd gone to bed for the night?"

As I was passing the old Greene place I observed signs of occupancy. A bed spring leaned against the side of the house and a huge begonia in a shiny brown pot stood on the doorstep. Obeying a sudden impulse I went in.

As I had half expected, they were not exactly young ladies. Miss Julia, the elder, was quite evidently the executive head of the firm. She was a plain, capable looking person, with a large frame, a generous mouth, and a nose which fulfilled the laws of proportion. She rested her hands on her hips as she talked with me, and her arms looked strong. Her sister, Miss Della, was rather pretty in a timid, thirty-five-year-old sort of fashion, and furnished, I judged, the imaginative, artistic, and sentimental elements of the combination. They did not impress me as being foolish people.

"I dropped in," said I, after introducing myself, "because I like to form my own impressions of new neighbors before Mrs. Packard has had a chance to classify them and fix their status for all time. Also, I am interested because embarking in the poultry business is a genuine adventure and I have always had a weakness for tales of adventure."

"Do you consider it a perilous adventure?" inquired Miss Della.

"Yes, and no," I replied. "If its success or failure were a foregone conclusion it would be no adventure at all. If farming of any sort were a sure thing it would lose its fascination. It is the possibility of success in the face of unforeseen difficulties that appeals to the sporting instinct. Have you the sporting instinct?"

Miss Della looked a little doubtful as to the propriety of my question and asked me if I raised chickens. I told her of my White Rocks which have thus far netted me a loss of $400, counting in the cost of equipment, but I didn't explain to her my deep-seated conviction that my pullets would never lay enough eggs to pay for the feed consumed at present prices. I had no desire to discourage her.

"You see," said I, "I'm an apple crank and, in spite of the theoretical excellence of the fruit-and-poultry combination, I find that no man can serve two masters. For either he will let his chickens get the roup or forget to shut them in when the hawks are about, or he will neglect his spraying and invite various undesirable guests into his orchard. You, I believe, plan to specialize on poultry."

It was Miss Julia who did the explaining. They had taken a summer course in poultry raising at the Agricultural College and had gained some previous experience with chickens on a small, backyard scale. They appeared to have abundant courage, and I knew that women, with their mothering instinct, often develop a capacity for raising live creatures that is a mystery to most men. I told them that Lucia and I would drop in on them as soon as they were settled, wished them the best of luck, and departed.

I was the first person in our neigh-

borhood to call on the poultry ladies. The second was Carlo Richards. He ambled in from the road quite casually the following afternoon and, in the course of a tour of investigation, encountered Miss Della half way between the house and the barn.

A dog who makes friends too readily is not the best sort for the farm, and Carlo had been well trained. He came to a standstill directly in Miss Della's path, fixing her with a look of inquiry and waving his tail slowly from side to side.

Miss Della's experience with dogs had been confined to the small, fluffy variety that lives indoors and offers cleanly paws to visitors. This large creature, barring her advance, frightened her. His look was inscrutable. Miss Della paused, her hand at her breast, and the two stood silently regarding each other.

Presently the kitchen door opened and Miss Della found her voice.

"Oh, Julia!" she called.

Miss Julia appeared with a broom and, in a moment, Carlo was scuttling around the corner of the house with tail and ears down and eyes turned backward.

Now this was a rather unfortunate beginning for the poultry ladies for, in our country, it is almost as important to be on good terms with the neighbors' dogs as with the neighbors themselves. Carlo, however, might have soon forgiven their lack of hospitality had it not been for his master's unfriendly attitude. I believe that Jim Richards wanted to add the old Greene place to his own farm, and though he was unable to produce the necessary funds, he nevertheless resented seeing any one else there.

Whatever the cause, he was distinctly ill-natured toward the poultry ladies. It was not merely his gruff manner; anybody could see through that. We knew Jim to be good-hearted at bottom and his solicitude for his rheumatic and complaining mother, with her weakness for gum drops, was a neighborhood joke. But toward the poultry ladies he appeared actually resentful. When he went over to speak to them about the line fence he frightened Miss Della almost to tears and left Miss Julia angry and very dignified.

Most of us, however, liked the poultry ladies. Mrs. Barlow spoke of them as "right plain, common folks," which might not have flattered them, but was a real compliment, nevertheless. Mrs. Barlow had fully expected to find them "stuck up." Miss Julia was a trifle reserved at first, perhaps, but entirely correct in all her neighborly relations, while nature had gifted Miss Della with a disposition which did not even recognize malice.

Seeing to it that the poultry ladies were not cheated became one of the most important of our fall activities, and before snow fell a brooder house had been built, the old laying house had been repaired, enlarged, and modernized, and a winter's supply of wood stored in the shed.

Carlo Richards, though strongly influenced by his master's attitude, made one genuine attempt that winter to establish friendly relations. Since early in December the fields had been covered with snow and the roads had been icy and dangerous. About the middle of January a thaw bared the

stone walls and loosened the brooks for a week or two, and during this brief intermission of warmth Carlo was particularly active, ranging across the fields and through the woods, scarring up rabbits and acting precisely as though he thought spring were at hand. During his scouting, one day, he managed to claw his way down through the still frozen earth and bring to light a somnolent and unbathed woodchuck. Carefully shaking the slumbering life out of it, he lifted it in his strong jaws and, trotting across the fields, deposited it proudly at the feet of Miss Julia who was at that moment emerging from her house. Miss Della would probably have uttered a high-pitched "Oh!" and retreated hastily, but Miss Julia stood her ground.

"Why, you horrid dog!" she cried. "Take that nasty old thing away."

Carlo had evidently not expected such a prompt rejection of his peace offering and sank back on his haunches with a look of perplexity. Miss Julia reached out a hesitating foot and thrust the offensive object from her doorstep. Carlo pounced upon it, and casting back at her a half-hurt, half-resentful look, trotted off with his trophy.

I am inclined to think that if this episode had ended more satisfactorily for Carlo, things might have been different. As it was, the poultry ladies were forced to live through the succeeding months in a state of tacit enmity with their nearest neighbor and his dog. They thought of patching up a truce by paying a friendly visit to Mrs. Richards, but Mrs. Ben Packard dissuaded them. A call on Mrs. Richards, she asserted, seldom resulted in peace of mind, though this was, to be truthful, doing the poor old lady somewhat of an injustice. One had only to talk with her about her ailments to make the call a success.

Toward the end of February the poultry ladies started their incubator, and by the first of May the brooder house was full of little downy balls and the first hatch was sprouting feathers in the laying house. The poultry ladies hired Fred Barlow to plow their garden and plant a couple of acres to corn and potatoes, and the old Greene place showed signs of unwonted activity.

Spring came on fast, and almost before we knew it the apple trees were in bloom and the orioles were building. I was very much occupied with my own plowing and spraying, but occasionally business took me down the Valley Road and, one evening, as I was jogging homeward a bit late, I was invited in to supper by the poultry ladies. I telephoned up to Lucia and accepted.

There were buckwheat cakes, and maple syrup which the poultry ladies had made in March. It was a trifle thin, perhaps, but they were very proud of it.

"I approve of these cakes," said I. "If you have graduated from self-raising flour you have made great progress."

The poultry ladies were very gracious, and I was pleased to learn that their hatch had been good and their prospects were bright, for I could see that they had something on their minds. At length it came out.

"You know Mr. Richards pretty

well, don't you, Mr. Bowers?" asked Miss Julia.

"Like a book," said I.

"Well, please tell us why he is so unfriendly."

"The rural mind," said I, "having a restricted horizon, is apt to work in concentric circles. Jim's mind, somehow, got pivoted on the notion that he didn't want educated poultry ladies on the farm next his. Don't ask me why, or what he fancied you would be like. The fact remains that his mind tenaciously swings on that pivot."

Miss Della's brow was puckered.

"I mean," I explained, "that he has no reason for his attitude. Has he been very terrible lately?"

"No," said Miss Della, "only it is very trying."

"Of course," said I.

"Do you think," asked Miss Julia, "that he could be pried loose from his pivot?"

"I am not a pessimist," I responded.

"I don't like to ask favors—to presume on your friendliness, Mr. Bowers—but if you should be willing to try your hand at it we would be eternally grateful."

It was June before I had another chance to say more than "Good morning" to the poultry ladies. I overtook Miss Della on the road half a mile below her house, with her arms full of mountain laurel.

"Can I give you a lift?" I asked.

She looked up quickly with a smile and I helped her into the buggy.

"How are the chickens?" I asked.

"Well," she said, "you know how frightfully high feed it. But the dear chicks are doing their share. It won't be long now before we shall have some cockerels to sell for broilers."

Our hill air had certainly been good to Miss Della. There was color in her checks and her eyes sparkled as she spoke of the broilers. Her walk had set free a few little curly wisps of hair about her ears and she made a pretty picture as she peeped up at me over her laurel.

"Have you talked with Mr. Richards?" she asked, after she had inquired after Lucia.

"I have," said I.

"I thought so," said she.

"Is he getting more neighborly?" I inquired.

"I think he is," she replied. "He nods now when he meets us, and this morning he actually spoke. Said we needed rain. And one day last week his mother sent Billy Packard over to borrow a pint of rye meal. I think that's a good sign; don't you?"

"The best in the world," said I.

"Now what else can we do to help matters along?" she asked, as I assisted her to alight in front of her house.

"Love me, love my dog," I replied; and it amused me to feel that she was standing gazing after me with that puzzled look of hers as I drove on up the road.

As a matter of fact, I had spoken to Jim not once, but many times. I knew it wouldn't do to let off both barrels the first time I saw him. I approached the subject circuitously and by easy stages and conducted a series of diplomatic conversations which were not, I am pleased to believe, without success.

As the summer advanced, I became convinced that Jim was growing more

reasonable. I saw him stop for a moment one day and exchange a few words with Miss Julia, and I learned that his mother's heart had been won over by frequent gifts of garden vegetables and currant jelly.

I think Miss Della took my remark about the dog seriously, for she told me she had tried to coax Carlo into the yard with a bone and had ended by tossing it to him as soon as he approached. To cap the climax, Jim gave Miss Della a lift in his buggy one evening when he overtook her on the road.

But in September all the fat was spilled into the fire. Jim had potatoes in his northwest field, next the old Greene place, and after he had dug them he seeded the piece down to winter rye. This time I was amused to note that he took a back-to-the-lander's advice and mixed vetch with his rye. Later, he informed me privately of his belief that it was the vetch that made all the trouble. However, that may have been, he had no sooner got his seed in than one hundred and fifty vigorous young Leghorn pullets and cockerels came sailing over the stone wall and spread out over the field like a flock of huge white crows. White Leghorns can work extraordinary havoc when the mood strikes them, and in half an hour they had unearthed all the seed worth mentioning on one tenth of Jim Richard's four-acre field and settled down to a systematic widening of their activities.

Carlo was the first to observe the depredation and charged into the snowy flock like a maddened bull. The silly creatures, of course, hadn't the sense to beat an orderly retreat, but went scurrying and flying aimlessly about in their terror with a prodigious squawking and flapping of wings. The racket reached the ears of the astonished poultry ladies and they came hurrying out of their house to learn the cause of the disturbance. Scrambling over the stone wall, they rushed among their precious pullets, adding to the confusion with their cries and waving aprons.

Eventually Carlo and the poultry ladies all settled down to a more systematic campaign and gradually drove the marauding flock back over the stone wall to their own domain and the din diminished sufficiently to make audible the shouts of Jim Richards hurrying across the soft field. Presently he came up, red-faced and puffing. It was evident that he was struggling for the suitable form of expression.

"This won't do," he cried. "It won't do at all. I didn't scatter this seed for your hens' dinner and you ought to have known enough to look out for them. Look at what they've done!" He surveyed the scratched ground wrathfully.

"We will pay for any damage done," said Miss Julia with dignity.

"That's all very well," stormed Jim, "but time's too precious just now to have to do the same piece of work over twice. You'll just have to keep those hens at home or there'll be trouble."

The poultry ladies did keep their hens at home. They shut them up in the poultry yard until the little bronze-colored spears of new rye began to appear and the chief danger was over. But that did not close the newly

opened breach between them and Jim Richards, and they took the affair much to heart. Gentle Miss Della came near to weeping when she told me about it.

"Don't be discouraged," I advised, though I had to confess to myself that the matter did look a bit hopeless. "Something may happen to straighten things out. I never knew Jim Richards to harbor a grudge for long."

About the tenth of October, when we were busy with the apples at my place, and the rock maple near Jim Richards's spring house had reached the very climax of its autumn gorgeousness, a doe strayed down from the hills into Jim's south pasture. Carlo, who was attending to some private business along the stone walls at the lower edge of the six-acre mowing, caught the scent of her on the light breeze and started pell-mell across the pasture. He kept among the blueberry bushes and white pine seedlings at the upper end until he was within a dozen yards of the beautiful creature and then broke out into the open.

The doe pivoted like a flash on her slender hind legs and in half a dozen long bounds disappeared over the brow of the slope and into the pine and laurel thicket below. Carlo followed her at top speed and, catching the fresh scent, turned to the right and dashed through the undergrowth, over the dividing wall, and into the ravine at the lower edge of the old Greene farm. Here the trail turned again to the left and down the steep bank toward the brook. Carlo pressed on blindly, half tumbling through the rocks and underbrush.

Just as he was checking his headlong rush near the bottom, a mass of dried leaves and twigs gave way beneath his feet and his right foreleg sank down in a narrow crevice between two rocks. He toppled heavily over, snapping both bones.

For a few minutes he lay stunned with the shock and pain. The doe had made good her escape and all was quiet save the liquid murmur of the brook below.

Presently the dog opened his eyes and drew his legs up, whimpering softly. The desire to get back home came upon him, and he tried to crawl a little way up the hill. But he was weak with pain and the bank was steep and difficult and he was forced to give up the attempt. He sank back upon his side and lay panting and whining a little.

He may have lain there half an hour, tortured by the pain in his broken leg, when his sharp sense caught the sound of breaking twigs and voices above him. He ceased his panting and pricked up his ears. Then he uttered a sharp cry and fell to moaning in a falsetto key.

Just above him, at the edge of the thicket, the poultry ladies were about to return to the house with their arms full of wild asters and goldenrod and flaming sumacs. Miss Della suddenly clutched her sister's arm.

"What's that?" she exclaimed.

Both ladies listened breathlessly.

"It sounds like some animal," said Miss Julia.

"Oh," cried Miss Della, drawing back a little.

"I think it's hurt," said Miss Julia.

"Oh," said Miss Della in a different tone. "Would you dare go in there?"

Miss Julia dared. Parting the bushes and peering before her she made her way cautiously down the rocky bank, her sister following closely.

The suffering Carlo looked up and saw the two poultry ladies slowly approaching. He made a little struggling movement as though to meet them and then sank back again and waited.

It was Miss Della who reached him first.

"Why, it's Carlo Richards!" she cried. The sight of such evident distress went straight to her tender heart and she brushed by her sister and dropped on her knees beside the poor animal. She stroked his head and spoke soft words to him, and Carlo gazed up gratefully at her and licked her hand. Miss Julia, stooping down beside them, discovered the limp and broken leg.

"He may have to be shot," she said. "We must go at once and tell Mr. Richards."

"You go," said Miss Della. "Someone ought to stay here with the poor thing."

Miss Julia found Jim busy stacking corn fodder, and he looked up at her in surprise and, I like to think, a little sheepishly as she told him of the catastrophe. He followed her without a word.

They found Miss Della seated on the ground with Carlo's head in her lap.

"It's hurting him dreadfully," she said with moist eyes.

Jim picked up the dog in his strong arms and led the way up the bank. At the top they parted company, Jim scrambling over the wall with his burden. Then he turned and faced them for a moment.

"Thank you," he mumbled huskily. They were the only words he had spoken.

That evening Miss Della called him up on the telephone.

"How is Carlo?" she asked. "Will he have to be shot?"

"Oh, no," said Jim. "He'll be all right. I've had the veter'nary up to set the bones. Carlo's a sensible dog and will keep quiet till they mend. He'll be all right."

Jim Richards was more grateful than he seemed. A polite expression of thanks was scarcely in his line, but a change in his attitude toward the poultry ladies was immediately apparent. Next morning he called with a glass of quince jelly which he said his mother had sent over.

"How is Carlo?" asked Miss Della.

"Oh, he's all right," said Jim. "He's gettin' along fine."

"May I come to see him?" she asked, and I know it must have taken nearly as much courage as it did to venture into the laurel thicket. Jim's face relaxed into a grin.

"Sure," said he. "He'll be glad to see ye."

In the afternoon Miss Della called on Carlo. She found him lying on a pile of burlap in the kitchen with his leg incased in splints and bandages. As she entered, he raised his head with an expression of glad welcome and began thumping the floor loudly with his tail.

"Why, bless his dear old heart!" cried Miss Della, stooping down to pat him. When she looked up again

she caught Jim gazing at her with a peculiar expression that made the color mount to her face.

I learned something of all this at my place on the hill, and the next time I drove down the Valley Road I stopped and asked Jim about his neighbors.

'Humph!" said he. "Them fine hens of theirs won't do much layin' this winter if they crowd 'em all into that little old chicken house. I'm goin' to haul these here boards over tomorrow an' help 'em to put up an addition."

I went on my way rejoicing.

Our first cold snap came early that winter and it *was* cold. Four days after Thanksgiving the mercury was twenty above at noon and had dropped to zero by sundown. The sudden change in temperature caught almost everybody unprepared, and that night the poultry ladies filled their kitchen stove with wood before they went to bed.

It was too much for the old chimney. About eleven o'clock Miss Julia was awakened by the smell of smoke and jumped out of bed. The kitchen was thick with it. No flame had appeared and the trouble was difficult to locate. Miss Julia took a deep breath and plunged into the smoke with a lantern. She found the chimney wall so hot she could scarcely bear her hand on it. An ominous crackling sound somewhere inside the wall frightened her.

Arousing her sister she ran to the telephone and called up the neighbors. Jim Richards was the first to arrive, followed by Ben Packard and the Barlow boys. Jim found an ax and ripped off the lath and plaster. A tongue of flame shot out into the room and a red glow began creeping up the kitchen wall behind a thick curtain of smoke. Jim grabbed a pail of water from Miss Julia's hand and dashed it on.

The smoke and steam became thicker than ever and Jim ordered the poultry ladies to stay in the dining-room and keep the door shut. Fortunately, the kitchen tank—the little cistern that holds the spring water piped down from the ridge—was full and Jim was able to subdue the fire on the chimney side. When Ben arrived Jim was standing on the kitchen table, ripping out the ceiling.

Then more help began to come and in less than an hour Ben Packard pronounced the fire entirely out. The kitchen was a sorry mess of charred and dripping wood and plaster and the water was fast freezing on the floor. Windows had been opened everywhere to let out the smoke and the rooms were all bitterly cold. But the house had been saved and the neighbors were glad to hurry back to their homes, stamping and blowing on their hands, keenly alive to the midnight discomfort now that the excitement was over.

All but Jim Richards. He was lying on the lounge in the sitting-room with Miss Della hovering over him and Miss Julia building up the fire in the sitting-room stove.

After the Barlow boys had got into action and the fire was well under control, Jim had yielded to a sense of giddiness produced by the smoke and had sunk down quietly on the floor by the dining-room door. Ben Packard dragged him to the lounge and the poultry ladies revived him.

But when he opened his eyes he complained of such a terrific headache that they telephoned the circumstances to Mrs. Richards and compelled him to remain where he was. Ben helped him to get off his wet and icy clothing and they wrapped him in blankets and gave him hot tea. Then they discovered that his hands were severely burned and Miss Della brought linseed oil and bandages.

Next morning Jim wanted to go home to breakfast, but they contrived to keep him quiet until late in the afternoon. All day they fussed over him, Miss Julia, Martha-like, occupying herself with the affairs of a badly disorganized household, while Miss Della ministered constantly to her patient.

Jim's head continued to ache and they wouldn't let him talk much, but I fancy he slept but little. I dropped in for a few minutes about noon to see if there was anything I could do, and Miss Julia kept me whispering out in the dining-room as though Jim were mortally ill. I peeped in at them, however, and caught a glimpse of Miss Della, deft and gentle, tiptoeing about the room, and Jim following her every movement with his eyes.

That, of course, was the end of the little feud between Jim Richards and the poultry ladies, but that the neighbors should be giving Miss Della a linen shower by March was something I must confess I hadn't dreamed of. Mrs. Barlow said she had seen it coming away back last summer, but Mrs. Barlow's memory is always surprisingly stimulated by subsequent events. The details of the courtship never became known, for Miss Julia knew how to put on a most forbidding "none of your business" look when she liked. I, for one, was heartily glad, for Jim was honest and steady and kind at bottom, and I knew he would improve under Miss Della's influence.

I saw them strolling together up the crossroad to Jim's house about supper time one night in April. They were apparently so engrossed in each other that they never heard my buggy wheels on the bridge and I refrained from hailing them.

Just before they disappeared beyond the lilac bush by the corner of Jim's house, Carlo, his broken leg almost as good as new, came dashing out from somewhere. He leaped on Jim as though he were attacking an intruder and seemed to enjoy being thrown back six or eight feet every time, but when he turned his attention to Miss Della his attitude changed entirely. He walked quietly beside her, stretching up his long muzzle toward her face and pressing his head against her hand.

I saw her stop and stoop down impulsively. She put her arms around the dog's neck and buried her face for a moment in his coat. When she looked up at Jim again her eyes were radiant and he just couldn't help resting his fingers on her shoulder and letting them slip down her arm as she rose.

I felt suddenly as though I had been peeping through someone's window and I was conscious of a slight tightening at my throat as I started on.

When I got home I got out a copy of a certain little book I was planning to present to Miss Della, and on the fly-leaf I wrote, "Love me, love my dog." I knew she would understand.

THE MIDDLE EAR

BY GERALD MORGAN

The middle ear isn't the sort of ear that has to be washed every morning. It is a part of the human machine indispensable to aviators who don't want to lose their licenses.

I'VE always had a place in Kent, at least for a good many years now, and I was there when the war broke out. I bought the place outright in 1910, because I found it an ideal place to work. It is really just a village house with a garden in a little town called Upton, near enough to London for me to run up there two or three times a week if I have to. My work is scientific research of a special character which has nothing to do with this story.

Luckily I was well known in the neighborhood, and though it was made a restricted area, the authorities left me alone in spite of my American citizenship. And even when the aviation school was established there, no one questioned my right to walk about as freely as in times of peace.

I suppose I shouldn't have met the officers of the flying corps if one of them had not happened to be a Canadian. One day he saw me reading the New York Times, which I get by mail, and asked me for it. He wanted, he said, to find out how the baseball championship was coming on, having acquired that taste on our side of the line. This was in late September.

"I like to read the box scores," he said. He paused. "I never thought the Boston Braves could do it," he added. "I wonder if they have a chance with the Athletics?"

I replied that I did not know, offered him all my papers, and asked him what he was doing at Upton, for I thought then that he was an American, too.

From the very start I found him disagreeable, as disagreeable as he looked, with his lean face and his long nose. He took my Times and said he was sorry it was not the Sun.

"I'm a Canadian, born at Montreal," he informed me. "I learned flying in America, where I was pretty well known. Haven't you ever heard of Allan Gilbert? My God, what old pieces of junk I used to risk my life in, those days, at County fairs and old home weeks and Fourth of Julys! I used to watch the beastly people who felt themselves half cheated if I didn't fall. I hate the Americans." He paused. "Not that I like the British," he added, contemplatively.

"Then I came over here," he went on, "on the first boat I could get after the war broke out. I went right to the Admiralty. I wasn't going to stay at home with those hangers on of Sam Hughes." He lit his pipe. "I volunteered for the front, but I had shown my record in the shops and in the air,

and for a while they detailed me to look over some motors. After that they sent me here to teach the kids, and here I expect I'll stay." He knocked his pipe against his boot. "There goes that old bit of raw beef, Villiers," he said, unexpectedly.

The man referred to appeared to be, at that distance, a perfect type of the British Senior Major. Gilbert said, "He's my chief. Don't know any more what's inside his motor than the horse he's riding. And he can't fly. God only knows what good he is." Then, with a curt, "Thanks for the papers," Gilbert swung off in the direction of the Park.

I certainly should never have seen Gilbert again if I could have helped it. But there was in Upton an American woman, an amateur water color artist, who had lived there for two or three years, and neither asked nor was asked any questions. Who she actually was I do not know, even now. I had acquired the habit of having tea or supper with her two or three times a week simply because she was the only other American in Upton. I knew that her name was Mrs. Shields, that she was a widow, and that was all. She was about thirty, good looking in a way, quite ladylike, but the country people whom I knew remained aloof and suspicious. I remember one of them saying, "No one knows who she is," in a very decided way. It was curious that I discovered so little about her, but she was very reserved and talked chiefly of her water colors, her garden, and of the village people, who all liked her. I am sure she had very little money. She was a Southerner, and I surmised that something had gone wrong in her married life. Her husband had been dead some years.

Like most other women, she was romantic about the flying corps and was quite excited when she found there was to be an aviation school at Upton. She was particularly anxious to meet the candidates,—the boys who were learning,—and knowing that I knew Gilbert, she asked me to take her to the Park.

I remember what a bright and sunny afternoon it was, and how we saw Gilbert and Villiers—Gilbert had given me his card to pass the sentry at the gate—standing together in the middle of the fields, both in their flying uniforms. Villiers was a ruddy, thick-set man of about forty,—a typical sporting squire. Gilbert had made a flight with one of the boys and Villiers was going to make one. Naturally, they were preoccupied and not particularly glad to see us, but of course there was nothing for me to do but to present Gilbert to Mrs. Shields, and he presented Villiers.

It was not until that afternoon that I began to admire Mrs. Shields. I don't know how she did it, but by just a word or two she made a definite impression on those two dissimilar men in one short moment, and before Villiers left to make his flight she had invited him to tea some day, and he had accepted. We three watched Villiers as he climbed in beside the pilot some few hundred yards away.

I turned to Gilbert and said, "I thought you told me Villiers couldn't fly."

"He can't," Gilbert replied. "Weak wrists. He broke them both two years ago in a fall from his horse. They

say he used to fly well," he added, rather ungraciously.

"Oh, look at them going up," exclaimed Mrs. Shields. "Does Mr.——"

"Flight Commander Villiers," prompted Gilbert, acidly.

"Does Commander Villiers always go up with the boys?"

"No," said Gilbert, "I do that. I teach them. When I think a boy is fit to have a temporary commission, I tell Villiers, and he goes up in the observer's seat—he can't fly any more—and passes on him. That's what he's doing now. Oh, no, I'm only instructor, with the rank of Flight Lieutenant. Villiers is boss."

"What nice looking boys," said Mrs. Shields. "Do they all learn well, Mr. Gilbert?"

"They're a pretty good crowd," Gilbert replied. It was odd to hear him slip into the American idiom, in which he was really more at home. "Nine out of ten get through. There's one who won't do, though, that sallow chap over there—no nerve. You know the air's a tricky place, Mrs. Shields, and time and time again, when we get up there, it slips out underneath us. Then, all we can do is to sit slack and wait till it cushions under us again. I can't teach that chap that. He grips his levers like a drowning man. You ought to see him stare!" Gilbert laughed. "To give that sort a pilot's license is like giving him an order to be buried. And here in the service we can't waste machines. He paused. Then, "Do you see that good-looking, fair-haired chap over there? He won't pass. He can't judge distance. He's all right up in the air—good as the average—but when he starts to land, he doesn't know where he is. First time he flattened out way high—thought he'd arrived. Second time he'd have dug her nose in the dirt if I hadn't taken hold. A man's no good at this game who can't judge distance."

Gilbert paused and looked round. "The rest are pretty good," he said. "I should think about four out of ten, if they live, may become finished flyers, which is above the average. Yes, the rest will do—" He stopped. "There's just one other," he added, dropping his voice, "I'm not sure of. I haven't told Villiers. Do you see that tall, good-looking boy over there? Praed his name is. I'm not sure of him. Did you ever hear of the middle ear?"

I swear that at that moment there was something about that lean man Gilbert, something about what he said, that made a nerve click down in the deep parts of my spinal cord. "What do you mean by the middle ear?" I said.

"That's what we aviators call it," Gilbert went on. "Pathologists have another name. It's the nerve center in a man's head that controls his sense of balance. Sometimes in some men it doesn't function right. Then we say he's got a dead middle ear, and we tell him for the love of God to keep out of the air. But it isn't always easy to be sure. Look at Praed over there. He's got nerve; he's a good judge of distance; and he learns a motor, inside and out, the way other men understand a horse or a yacht. He's the best man I've got, but I'm holding him up because I'm not sure about his ear. When I take him up he's steady enough, but he watches those planes of his out of the corners

of his eyes like a hawk. It's rare, but I've seen it before. I've been waiting for some clouds. In the clouds he can't see his planes, can't see farther than arm's length, and then unless I, who suspect the danger, am with him, over she goes, and—zingo—bingo—bing," he added expressively.

"You mean—" I began, I wanted to be sure.

"I mean he'll roll over and come down like a dead partridge," said Gilbert.

He chatted with Mrs. Shields until Villiers finished his flight. I have never seen such a ruddy face as Villiers'—a startling, vivid, flamboyant red which arrested one's attention even across the field. He bowed to Mrs. Shields. He was very courtly, like a polite Alice in Wonderland turkey cock.

"Mr. Gilbert," he said, "I should like to make another flight with Sampson. He is still very awkward."

"I know it," Gilbert replied, testily. "He could do with another month's training, but pilots seem to be wanted in a hurry."

"Tell Sampson to be ready tomorrow morning at nine, Mr. Gilbert," Villiers said. One noticed at once, seeing those two men together, how Villiers managed to ignore Gilbert, and how Gilbert hated him for it.

After that day one of the two was usually at Mrs. Shields's. Their never being there at the same time was partly the result of their official duties, and partly, I think, because of some sort of tacit understanding. Neither, apart from his work, had anywhere else to go, for the country people treated them both with indifference. Of Gilbert they said that a man of that type should never have had a commission in any of His Majesty's Services; make him a sergeant if you like—and they dismissed Villiers by saying, "George Villiers? He's one of the greatest bores in England."

Mrs. Shields did not mind my sometimes disturbing those tête-à-têtes. When Gilbert was there, he talked all the time—long, personal stories of shows and fairs in towns throughout our middle West, stories about flying, and of motor races before the days of flying. He was an odd man; one of those men whose age may be anywhere between twenty-five and fifty; and there was a queer lack of human sympathy about him. He was all brain and nerve. Mrs. Shields said she believed the man was made of whalebone, and that expressed it.

Villiers, on the contrary, used to sit solidly on his chair and talk about the weather. About himself he never spoke, and it was from the country people that I learned about him. In his early life he had been known as one of the best cross country and steeplechase riders in England; he had not begun to fly until he was thirty. But good nerve, good hands and a good seat—those three prerequisites of a first-class horseman or a first-class flyer—had made him equally famous as an expert and a pioneer of British Aviation. In 1913 he had a fall while hunting in Ireland and broke both his wrists so badly that he had never been able to fly again but, of course, he was still well qualified, as an observer, to judge the qualifications of the candidates for the Royal Flying Corps.

All this I told Mrs. Shields. "He isn't exactly a bore," she said. "He's rather nice and advises me about my vines and things. He has only one or two general ideas it's true; and one of them is that one doesn't associate with men like Mr. Gilbert, at least not socially. He told me he had no personal feeling against Mr. Gilbert at all. He thinks it's perfectly simple; he explained it to me because I'm an American."

I laughed. "How does Gilbert feel about it?" I asked.

When I said that a shadow crossed Mrs. Shields's face. "It really isn't pleasant," she said, seriously. "They are neither of them ordinary men. Gilbert used to call Villiers a piece of beef; now he never speaks of him. And they never say a word to each other except when they're on duty. They have every meal separately. The unpleasant part is that they have never had a hard word over it. Gilbert's not a man, he's a machine; and Villiers, when he does get an idea, gets it in his teeth exactly as an old English bulldog would, and is exactly as likely to let it go. I don't like it at all. It wasn't nearly so bad when Gilbert talked."

"And they weren't quite on such bad terms before they met you?" I asked.

She smiled. "Not quite, I'm afraid," she said. "As if I cared whether they both fell off a cloud tomorrow!" But I thought she seemed a little nervous.

For the next two weeks I was in London and I forgot all about Mrs. Shields and her aviators. But one day later, as my work had slackened up, I strolled round to Mrs. Shields's house to pay her a visit. As I walked up the steps, Gilbert threw open the door and brushed past me without so much as a look. His face was quite white with some emotion, and not pleasant to see. Nevertheless, I went in.

Mrs. Shields was sitting quietly in a chair. She looked frightened.

I said bluntly, "What was the matter with Gilbert?"

She shivered a little. "He asked me to marry him," she replied simply.

I said nothing; I did not know what to say.

"I said," she went on, " 'Mr. Gilbert, I'm awfully sorry, but it's out of the question. I couldn't possibly.' And he said, 'Why not?' just like that." She paused for breath; she was really frightened. "Then he said," she continued, 'it's on account of Villiers, isn't it?' He looked—he looked like a devil. I tried to answer, but I couldn't; all I could do was to shake my head. He pointed his long finger at me and said, 'It *is* on account of Villiers.' Then he rushed out of the house. What do you suppose he intends to do?"

Mrs. Shields was actually trembling now, and I reassured her as well as I could. Gilbert's proposal had evidently came as a complete surprise; she repeated over and over again that she had never given him any reason to imagine such a thing. I told her not to think about the matter any more. I noticed that she did not speak of Villiers; I was beginning to have my suspicions.

I didn't stay more than ten minutes, and when I came out, there was Gilbert, standing in the street about a

hundred wards away, waiting.

"I've made a fool of myself," he said, briefly. "I lost my head and asked Mrs. Shields to marry me. That's why I passed you without speaking just now. I want you to go back and apologize for me. Will you do that?"

Evidently Gilbert surmised that Mrs. Shields was sufficiently frightened to tell me about it. "And don't tell anybody," he added, which made me angry, but for Mrs. Shields's sake I told him that I would do what he asked, and went back to the house.

Mrs. Shields was much relieved. "Of course I accept his apology," she said. "I'm sure I was horribly rude. Go and find him."

I returned to Gilbert with her message. But just then the ruddy-faced, leather-gaitered Villiers swung round the corner, evidently on a similar errand. He bowed to me in his usual absent-minded way; then he stopped.

"You must bring Mrs. Shields to the field tomorrow," he said politely. "I'm going to pass all the rest of the candidates then. Next week we get a new lot." He paused, waiting for me to accept. I bowed, and he passed by us to her house.

Gilbert's expression did not change, but his light blue eyes contracted into their deep-set sockets like the head of a snail. I felt that if I touched him he would jump twenty feet; I didn't even dare to speak. As it was, we walked down the street without saying a word and parted in equal silence. I dreamed of Gilbert that night. His cold, controlled jealousy was a nightmare sort of passion, capable of diffusing all about him the quality of fear. I remembered a man once saying that love in itself was neither good nor bad, but took its character from the character of the person in love. According to his theory, love was like fire. "One might light fires," he said, "and the fire would always be the elemental fire, but the smell of the smoke depended upon what one lit." And I could not help thinking that Mrs. Shields had lit, in Gilbert, a pretty bad-smelling heap of brush.

I went to Mrs. Shields's house early the next day, for I wanted to know whether or not she meant to go to the Trials. I found her in her garden, happy and composed; Gilbert had already come to see her and to apologize; it was only a strong fancy; everything was all right now; of course she was going to go to the Trials. She went upstairs to get her hat, and I waited and wondered whether the expression which I had seen on Gilbert's face could have been summoned by merely a strong fancy. I thought not.

It was a rough November day. I remember, as I watched the low heavy clouds, that I wondered whether they meant wind or rain. When we reached the Park, Gilbert met us at the gate. Across the field I saw Villiers and one of the candidates standing by an aeroplane, ready to start. Villiers was slapping his bootleg with a short stick which he always managed to carry with him, even in the air. A moment later they took their seats and one of the workmen started the motor.

The machine—a biplane—rose and flew past us, not fifty yards away. Villiers touched his hat, and as they

went by, my eye caught the face of the boy in the pilot's seat. It was vaguely familiar. I heard Mrs. Shields say suddenly, "Who's that driving?"

I turned and looked at Gilbert; his face was quite impassive. "That's Praed," he answered briefly.

"Praed?" For a second I could not remember. Then again I heard Mrs. Shields say, "Do you mean the boy without a sense of balance?"

Gilbert's words, "Dead middle ear—come down like a dead partridge," shot through my mind as if it had been a telegraph instrument,—click-click—I turned on Gilbert. The man had left us and was walking toward the hangers. The boys were moving in groups about the machines.

"Good God!" I said.

Mrs. Shields was perfectly white; she did not say a word. I don't know what she thought; I thought of shouting—as if that would have done any good, with the biplane half a mile away, above the noise of the motor.

Then Gilbert deliberately walked back to where we were standing. He looked up and said to Mrs. Shields, "She's making altitude." Mrs. Shields did not answer, nor did I. We simply watched the biplane circling overhead, with our heads bent back. I did not look at Gilbert again; and again he strolled unconcernedly away.

Mrs. Shields took my arm and held it. "Are you all right?" I asked.

"Yes," she answered, quietly. "Do you know, this is a deliberate attempt at murder? How does he dare?"

"Who, Gilbert?" I asked. "I don't know. He'll say he warned Villiers, I suppose. That's what he should have done."

"He never did," said Mrs. Shields, and for the life of me I could not deny it. Her arm gripped tighter.

Overhead the biplane was growing smaller and smaller as she circled and rose; at last we saw the haze of the lower mist-rim of the clouds between her and us. For a moment she soared, free and clear; then she slipped behind a heavy cloud-bank. It was as though the sky were a stage.

How long she was concealed I do not know; when next I saw her, her nose was pointed down. She was falling like a dead partridge.

Gilbert knew it, of course. He was standing stockstill, a hundred yards away. I could not see his face. The boys at least suspected something; they had stopped tinkering at the other machines. Mrs. Shields's hand gripped my arm still harder.

The biplane still kept coming, pointed down. Two or three boys began to run. I could see both men, aloft, working at the levers. Then suddenly she flattened out, not two hundred feet over the ground above us, swept down the field, turned, and aimed her landing at our feet.

"What the devil was Praed trying to do?" asked one of the boys.

"Can't imagine," another answered. "Praed's always sound."

I watched Gilbert; he was as nonchalant as ever. I swear I did not at that moment know what to think. I looked at Mrs. Shields; her face was still tense and drawn.

The biplane made her landing less than fifty yards away. Villiers was the first to descend. Every speck of color had left his ruddy face; it was like lead. Praed followed Villiers out

of the machine. Roundabout stood the other boys, none very close, all with slightly detached attitudes. The situation was not so much tense as unexplained. Gilbert was standing a few yards away.

Villiers turned to Praed and put his hand on the boy's shoulder. "I'm sorry I can't recommend you," he said, quickly. "I'll see you get a commission in the armored cars, old chap." Praed flushed and saluted; the boys melted away, but there was one at each side of Praed. Here was no disgrace.

Villiers stood there near the machine. He was plainly shaken. Finally he said—as if talking to himself—"My wrists were stronger than I thought."

He had been looking at the ground. He raised his head and saw Gilbert. At once the blood rushed back into his face.

He took his short stick and slapped his bootleg. Then he began to walk straight toward Gilbert as he stood there, slapping his stick as he walked.

Gilbert tried to stand his ground, but failed before that ruddy face, not in fear, but as a beast fails to stand before fire. When Villiers was five yards away, Gilbert turned and marched straight past the sentries through the gate. Villiers followed him perhaps twenty paces before he stopped.

Then for the first time, I think, he noticed us. He tried to say something to Mrs. Shields, but he choked. Finally he said, "I beg your pardon."

Mrs. Shields withdrew her arm from mine, stepped forward, and placed her arm in his.

"What I like best of all about you, George dear," she said, "what I liked best of all was the kindness you showed that boy."

And forgetting me, they walked away.

Look for BABYLON IN POSTER EFFECT, *By Harold de Polo* in our October issue. It is the story of a farm youth who is fascinated by an artist's model and forgets the girl to whom he is engaged. Then there is the drummer who completes the "poster effect" and says "love me nice."

THE RIFT IN THE ROMANCE

BY HELEN CAMPBELL

If contributers to the "Agony Column" were placed under civil service, Cupid would lose his job.

THEY were gathered round the stove at the far end of the convalescent's ward. Beans, 2844, Act. Co. Qmr. Sgt.,—to quote the Casualty List of July 19th,—was reading to them from "The Times."

"Go on! Don't stop!" they chorused.

The reader paused to re-adjust his arm-sling.

"Nothing left but the 'Births and Deaths' and the 'Court Circular,'" he declared, regretfully, "unless you'd like a go at the 'American Commercial Markets,' or 'Town Houses and Properties To Let.'"

"Look in the 'Cirklar' and see if the old woman's entertainin' any Dooks and Duchesses at our fishin' box whilst I've been off yachtin'!" suggested Yates, 49011, L.—Cpl. G., but Pte. McNulty interrupted him.

"Garn!" he exclaimed. "Give us a bit out o' the 'Agony,' Bill! 'Lonely orficer, invalided 'ome from trenches, would be glad of gift of grammarphone an' life-savin' weskit.' That's the stuff! *You* know!"

Beans studied the "Personals," obligingly.

"Righto!" he replied. "Here you are, then! Here's your chance, Porky! 'Over-burdened millionaire, anxious to share income with deserving Private, wounded at the Dardanelles. Red hair and freckles preferred.' How's that?"

Pte. McNulty grinned broadly.

"Get on!" he said. "Bar chaff! No kiddin'!"

Beans got on.

"What about this, then, Joe? 'Baby cut tooth midday to-day. Never forget. More urgent hourly. Rosie.' I bet that'll make some chap set up! And, I say! Listen to this, will you! 'Young woman, straightened circumstances, would gladly marry and devote life to care of well-to-do soldier blinded by war. Write Box A, 459, The Times.' Lordy! Someone's hard up for a job! What's wrong with her mug, I wonder!"

The group round the stove shouted. Nurse Williams, hurrying in, held up a warning hand and pointed to the screen-guarded bed.

The laughter ceased abruptly. They had forgotten.

Beans got up and shuffled toward the door, red-faced and ashamed.

"I'm going out to get a breath of air," he mumbled. "Want to come along, anybody?"

Hanes, 2733, W., lay very still behind the screen. His hands had been shot off at the wrists. His face and head were swathed about with band-

ages. Soon the doctor would be coming to take them off. He'd know then, one way or the other. If his sight were gone, there would indeed be nothing left.

Nurse Williams came and stood by his bed, looking down at him, pityingly.

"I'm afraid we're a noisy lot in here," she said. "I hope they don't disturb you too much. You know we'd move you if we could, but the wards are all filled up just now."

"I like to hear them laugh," he said. "It was a good joke! I wonder,—could you fetch that 'Times' here and read me something out of it again? In the 'Personals,' I think it was."

Nurse Williams put aside the paper as the doctor hurried in,—out-of-sorts, mechanically cheerful.

"Well, how's the patient this morning, eh? These are coming off for good today, I believe. We'll want some more of the three-and-a-half inch, please, Nurse. And some gamgee. You might get me some small eye swabs, too, if you will. This medium wool lot is no earthly use to anybody."

Returning, the nurse lifted the man's head and held it while the doctor unwound the bandages, carefully and very slowly. There seemed no end to them. Then the absorbent pads. Then—

"Don't try to open yet, Hanes! Quick, Nurse! Those small swabs and the solution there! Half a minute, man! More swabs, Nurse! Wait! There we are! Now, then! Ready, Hanes! How many fingers am I holding up?"

The eyes, blinking and straining, stared eagerly over the doctor's shoulder.

"Fingers? Yes! Yes! Where?"

Nurse Williams turned away, abruptly.

"Don't go yet! I want to talk to you. Are you still there, Nurse?"

"Yes, I'm here by the bed. But you must try to go to sleep, now."

"In a minute. But first,—are you sure you posted the letter?"

"Yes, quite sure. A week ago."

"And you got the address right? 'Box A, 459, The Times,'—that was it, wasn't it?"

"Yes, that's right. But it's very late, and you—"

"Please! Not yet awhile! I wanted to ask you something else. Or are you tired?"

The nurse's eyes filled slowly.

"No, I'm not tired. I'll stay. What is it?"

"It's only—do you think I did the square thing, offering myself like this? I'm afraid she wasn't reckoning on a blind man with no hands. She didn't say 'blind and disabled' did she,—by any chance? I can't remember."

"No, I don't think so. But that should make no difference. She wants to help, you know. It ought to make her care all the more."

His face brightened.

"She won't be worse off in a money way. We told her that in the letter, didn't we? It isn't as though she were marrying a helpless beggar. When I die she'll be left comfortable. That's something, isn't it, Nurse?"

"Yes, that's a great deal."

"I've been worrying about it all,—

worrying myself to death because she hasn't answered. I have such blasted nightmares, now. What if my letter was too late? What if some other fellow, worse off than I, got his there first? My God! What if I'm left to bear the thought of it alone, now, in the dark."

Nurse Williams laid her hand on his arm.

"Don't you think it's a great mistake for you to count on her so much?" she asked. "It's been so long now, since we wrote. And then, suppose she did come, and you found she wasn't the woman you've imagined, after all. Surely there must be someone else to turn to, friends who would gladly take you in and care for you when you are well enough to leave the hospital."

He struggled to raise himself on his elbows.

"Don't tell me she's not coming!" he begged, hoarsely. "She must come, I tell you! She's my only chance,—the only hope I have left. I don't know a living soul in England. I can't go back home now. Don't ask me why. But I've been paid now for what I did. It never was my fault! I swear to God it wasn't! She'd throttled one child before I got there! I—"

Nurse Williams, frightened in spite of herself, tried to quiet him.

"Of course it wasn't your fault," she said. "I'm sure you did what was right and necessary. But you mustn't think about it now. Try to go to sleep. If you fret yourself into a fever I shall be blamed for it."

He lay back again, more passive.

"You couldn't leave me like this," he pleaded. "Just tell me once you think she's coming to me and I'll try to forget for tonight. Tell me,—what do you think she'll look like? Will she have yellow hair or dark? I like 'em dark best."

The nurse closed her eyes and thought hard. She must quiet him somehow,—anyhow.

"She'll have brown hair and eyes," she declared, slowly. "She'll not be very tall,—just plump and comfortable, you know,—with a soft voice, soft hands and very pink cheeks. She'll wear a blue serge frock with a white collar, and—"

"Yes?" he breathed.

"And of course she's chosen yours out of all the letters she's received. She would have come to you at once, only she wanted to get her home quite ready for you both. She's very poor, but now that you are marrying her she'll be able to keep her little house. That makes her life a different thing."

"I'm glad of that," he said. "Go on!"

"All today she's been sweeping and dusting and polishing, as happy as a queen. There are clean curtains up at all the windows and,—and,—and a pork pie that she's made herself, in the larder!"

Hanes smothered a great chuckle. "Did I wake him?" he whispered.

Nurse Williams glanced at Pte. McNulty, snoring gently, undisturbed.

"I don't think you could," she said. "It was pork pie you told me you liked, wasn't it? Shall I go on? Well, tomorrow morning she'll build a crackling fire in the grate and pull a big chair, full of cushions, up in front of it. Then she'll put on her hat and jacket and come flying to fetch you.

Of course you'll stop at the parson's on your way back,—but it's a cold pork pie, you know! Now, good-night! The Matron will scold me in the morning for keeping you awake. I really must go, now,—really! Can I get you anything, first?"

He smiled at her. "No, thank you, Nurse," he said. "I think I can go to sleep now. Good night."

Nurse Williams was standing by his bedside when he awoke.

"I have good news for you," she said. "She's come."

He started up, radiant. "I knew she would!" he cried. "I knew she couldn't leave me to go away from here alone! Where is she? Is she here with you? I want to talk to her! I want to hear her voice!"

"I'll take you to her directly after you are dressed," she promised him. "You must be patient. She's waiting for you."

She bathed and dressed him, quickly, answering his questions, sharing in his excitement. He was going to be well cared for always, now,—very peaceful, very happy. She gave his arm a little squeeze as she led him down the echoing corridors. He felt a stabbing pain in his heart. Then he realized that he was walking for the first time since they had brought him there. Truly, it was a day of miracles.

"Where is she? When do we find her?" he questioned.

"We're almost there. In a little while. You must be patient. Are you getting tired?"

"No," he answered. "Nothing could tire me today."

He felt the air cold on his face and knew that they were in the street.

"Surely we must reach her soon!" he cried.

"Here. She's here. I've brought you to the parsonage. I must leave you now. Good bye."

A sudden terror caught at his throat as she slipped away from him. He stumbled forward, groping for her without hands.

"Nurse! Nurse Williams! Don't go!" he begged. "You mustn't leave me here! Where are you?"

Then he heard a strange man's voice. "What are you afraid of?" it said. "She's here. She's been waiting for you a long time. Will you stand here, close to her, and answer the questions as I put them to you?"

Dazed, he took his place beside the bride he could not see,—had neither touched nor heard. Footsteps and rustling behind him. The witnesses had come in and now stood silent, waiting.

It was over. They were man and wife. Someone was signing the register for him and he heard a murmur of good wishes. Then he felt a hand on his arm. The fingers dug into his flesh like the teeth of a trap and he felt himself drawn slowly toward the door.

"Come," said a voice.

Aghast, he strove to draw away his arm, straining to pierce the blackness and see the speaker's face.

"Who are you?" he whispered.

"Your wife," she answered. "Come."

She led him out of the house and along the streets, backwards and forwards, twisting and turning, up and

down, till his strength gave out and he sank down, fainting.

"Come," she said.

He struggled on again.

The fingers detached themselves from his arm, one by one. A door closed gently behind him, and he fancied he heard a key turned in the lock.

"This is our home," she said.

With the words, he saw again the vision conjured for him by the nurse the night before. The feeling of unreality, of terror, of despair, left him.

"Ah!" he cried. "I know! Tell me,—are there clean curtains up at the windows? Have you swept and polished and dusted it,—as happy as a queen? And—and—is there a pork pie that you made, in the larder?"

"Yes, how did you know?"

"Then I can almost see you, too!" he exclaimed, delighted. "You are plump and comfortable, with brown hair and pink cheeks. You have a soft voice,—soft hands—" He hesitated.

"Yes?" she said. "Soft hands?"

"Before you came to fetch me you drew a great chair, heaped with cushions, in front of the fire—"

"Yes," she said. "Come. I will lead you to it."

Once more the clutching fingers closed like steel upon his arm. Gently, very gently, came the sound of wood sliding over wood. A breath of fetid air crept upward from the floor and blew across his face. He recoiled, panic stricken, striving to free himself from the fingers which held him helpless in their deadly grip.

Now, back and forth across the floor, groaning and gasping, they rocked and fought, until at length, exhausted,—helpless because of his mutilated arms, he knew that he was worsted.

She drew him forward, struggling still, to the edge of that open crater in the floor. There they hung, swaying, for an instant only. But in that last instant he had seen her face; the yellow lips drawn backward in a snarl, the same eyes set close to the foxlike nose, those murderous hands,—the hands of the maniac beaten down by him to save her young child's life.

Nurse Williams drew the sheet gently over the dead man's face. The doctor had finished his examination.

"Heart!" he pronounced it. "He must have gone off quietly last night, soon after he fell asleep. Poor chap! I'm afraid it's the best thing that could have happened to him."

Private McNulty, stumping back from his constitutional, drew the nurse aside.

"There's someone out there askin' for Hanes 2733, W.," he whispered, jerking his thumb toward the door. "Said she's come a long way answerin' to a letter. I told 'er you'd be out in 'alf a mo' to talk to 'er."

Nurse Williams started.

"Who is she?" she asked. "Is she a little woman in a blue serge frock,—plump, with pink cheeks and—"

"Lor, no!" McNulty interrupted her. "*Plump!* She's got a fice on 'er like a 'eathen fox, she 'as! An' fingers like so many bleedin' nut-crackers! W'en I told 'er you'd be along soon 'thout me comin' back 'ere to fetch you, she caught 'old o' me—*so!* Gawd!"

He rubbed his injured arm, ruefully.

THE MAN AT SOLITARIA

BY GEIK TURNER

An ambitious individual tries to dictate in the affairs of a railroad without the formality of acquiring a controlling interest.

SOLITARIA will be found indicated on the map by a circle half as large as that which represents Chicago. That is Solitaria as it is advertised. In reality it consists of a side-track and watering tank on the Great Western Railroad, and a little wooden box opposite, courteously called a station, which is inhabited by a man whose aim in life is to watch the side-track and telegraph along the line how it is occupied at various hours of the day and night. Just to the east the Great Western makes its only distinct curve for miles through a little piece of woods. To the west it stretches straight across the face of Indiana, mottled with a million half-burned stumps, and cut into big squares by incalculable miles of rail fence.

The Man at Solitaria got to thinking it over—he had a great deal of time to do this—and he made up his mind that matters were going all wrong. In the first place, he thought he ought to be allowed more than twenty-five dollars a month for his services, and that, considering he had been running Solitaria alone for fifteen years, they ought to give him an assistant to talk to—to talk to and to allow him an occasional chance to sleep. These were, of course, entirely personal matters. But finally he made up his mind the whole thing was run wrong. It stood to reason; they never gave it any rest. Day after day and night after night they had sent freight trains and express trains, and express trains and freight trains chasing each other along the road till they had got it so it was all going to break down pretty soon,—the road, and the cars, and the men, and he himself—especially he himself; he saw that plainly. They were all going to stop short, one of these days, and fly to pieces.

Now, take himself, for instance: was it right that they should have kept running their trains by his door twenty-four hours out of the day, and 365 days a year, for fifteen years, disturbing him and depriving him of what little sleep belonged to him? Yet all night long they persisted in sending their freights jarring and clanking by and their express trains shrieking and making up time along the level grade. He got so he knew those whistles by name—he could hear them shriek for miles and miles in either direction—coming nearer and nearer, till the train rushed by in a cloud of yellow light. Then the next one came. It was bad enough at that, but when they got to calling him names it was more than

he could bear. Besides, there was the electricity those trains kept making and storing up in his station, faster than he could ever hope to get rid of it. It was taking his life away. He went out and watched the wheels of the freight trains crunching, and grinding, and squealing by, and he could see it just rolling off and running into the station. Then nights it came stealing over him, and numbing him, just as soon as he tried to get a little sleep, which, heaven knew, he was entitled to. Anybody knows that trains running by like that, day and night, store up more electricity in a station than a man can bear, especially if he is all alone. But they paid no attention to that. He often thought he would write to the division superintendent, who had been a telegraph operator himself, and ought to think of such things and tell him to stop it. But this plan he never carried out; he had asked for things before.

Now, whatever might be said, no one could accuse the Man at Solitaria of not giving the matter sufficient thought. For months during the summer he sat out on the platform of his box, in the baking sun daytimes, and through the close, airless Indiana nights, looking down the tracks between train times, and considering the question. He saw clearly they did not recognize the power and importance of the man they were wronging. He knew perfectly well, for instance, that any time he chose he could turn the switch to the side-track and stand an express train on its head in the ditch. That would be fascinating, certainly. Indeed, he considered the proposal seriously for a number of weeks, and figured carefully on what train he had better take; but finally thought better of his plan, too. It would stop only one train, which wasn't what he wanted at all. The Man at Solitaria felt the responsibility of his position; he decided to run the whole railroad himself.

Of course, he recognized that there would be opposition to this scheme on the part of the president and directors of the road, and the division superintendent,—especially the superintendent,—the Man knew the division superintendent. But the railroad must be run right. As a first step in that direction the Man saved up money and laid in a large supply of canned meats; he also secured two forty-four caliber revolvers and half a dozen boxes of cartridges.

Of course, the management of the Great Western Railroad didn't know what was going on in the mind of the Man—especially as he carried on most of his communications with human beings by telegraph. It didn't care much, either, as long as he kept awake eighteen hours a day and watched the side-track and told them how it was occupied. Consequently, no one knew of his intention of operating the road, and no one knew or probably ever will know why he chose such an unpleasant day for starting it.

It wasn't unpleasant in the sense that it was rainy—it was merely hot. Along down the track the heat rose in great zigzags, where the yellow sun beat down and baked a crust over the surface of Indiana. There was not a breeze in the air, not a sound except the occasional call of a quail from some distant rail fence, or the cry of a

seventeen-year locust in a dead tree. On the sunny side of the station at Solitaria the thermometer took its stand at 118 degrees, and refused to be moved, and the air was a semi-solid mass of cinders.

The Man at Solitaria made up his mind he would shut down his railroad at six o'clock. He laid in a good supply of water and loaded up his revolvers; then he shut up the station and made a kind of barricade of old ties around his telegraph instrument, and sat down inside and waited.

No. 64, the fast freight from the West, was due at 6:10 o'clock to draw up on the siding. No. 24, the fast express from the East, was due at 6:17. At 6:03 the Man telegraphed the station east that the freight was on the side-track and the main line was clear. The freight was not yet in sight. At 6:13 it reached the station, hurrying to make up lost time, and ran off the track; someone had turned the switch half way. The big engine jumped the rails, crashed up on the station platform, and stopped, without being overturned; three cars went off with it. The brakemen came running up along the train, and the engineer and fireman climbed down out of the cab, swearing and looking for the operator. Just then the express could be heard rushing along from the east, and two brakemen started up the track to head it off, on the dead run. At 6:16 the train appeared in sight. When she came around the curve and saw the freight she just stiffened right out and slid. It wasn't quite soon enough, however. She struck the freight cars just before she came to a stop, smashing a cylinder and nearly jerking the heads off the passengers. All the windows and doors of the coaches flew open with a slam, and the train hands and passengers began to swarm out like hornets out of a hornet's nest. The trainmen started forward on the run to see what was the matter and to look up the operator and find out what he was trying to do.

The Man opened a window in front of the station, with a revolver in his hand, and told them that what he was trying to do was none of their business. He was operating this damned road now, and he wanted them to understand it. Besides, he didn't want them on his platform. By way of emphasis, he fired a couple of shots as close to their feet as he could without hitting them. They got off, and he shut down the window with a bang. Somebody went around and tried a window in the rear, and he fired two shots through the glass. It was just as well they didn't try it again, for he would have nailed them the next time.

Then the trainmen went off to a respectful distance and discussed the situation, and the passengers retreated behind the coaches. The Man sat down and telegraphed that the express had gone by, but that No. 64 had a hot box on the side-track, which might keep it there for some time, so that No. 31, the west-bound freight, had better be sent along. He nearly paralyzed the passengers of the express train when they heard it on the line, but the brakemen stopped it all right in time to prevent it from landing on the back of the coaches.

By this time the station at Solitaria presented an unwonted and active

scene. Three trains were huddled up around the place, two of them tangled together in a heap. The engine of No. 64 stood up inquiringly on the station platform, like a big dog waiting to be let in. The trainmen and the passengers still stood around and discussed ways and means and swore at the Man and the infernal heat. Several times they had tried to approach the Man, but the Man at Solitaria was unapproachable. A big passenger from the West had declared he would go up, anyway, as a little thing like that had a comparatively mild effect on his nerves, and a small passenger from the East had tried the effect of kind words and moral suasion; but the big six-shooters of the Man had an equally discouraging effect on both.

In fact, the exhilaration of running a railroad was beginning to exercise a strange fascination on the Man at Solitaria. This was only natural, after all. The way he ran things was a good deal like firing railroad trains at a mark, with the certainty of hitting it, if nobody interfered. He recognized, however, that there was need of great discretion and intelligence in the matter. The train despatcher was already making the telegraph instrument chatter like a sewing-machine, asking the station to the west what had become of the express, which, of course, the station west didn't know.

The Man sent word down the line that a brakeman had come into the station and said there was a big wreck at a culvert three miles west. It was a bad wreck, with a great many killed, and the wrecking train should be sent at once. The train could run right by his station to the place, as the line was clear. In fifteen minutes the wrecking train was drawing out of the Centerville station, seventeen miles east, with all the doctors that could be raised in the vicinity, and coming down the line sixty miles an hour in a halo of hot cinders. If it hadn't been for a line of brakemen stationed up above the curve, there would have been a great opening for young doctors in Centerville. As it was, the train stopped so short on the curve that the front trucks of the engine ran off and the one passenger coach was jolted full of a mixture of frightened doctors and medicine vials.

By this time the Man had been operating the road for an hour and a half, and the excitement of the thing was growing intense, especially among the officials he had superseded. Trains were beginning to stack up at the stations east and west, waiting for developments, and the train despatcher was beating such a devil's tattoo on his instrument, trying to find out what was going on, anyhow, that the Man used up a great deal of patience and ingenuity trying to shoot him. As for the division superintendent, who had come on the wrecking train, his hair was rapidly growing white. But, as long as he could not effect a compromise with the Man, there was nothing he could do. The Man was engaged at present furnishing information on Solitaria to the outside world, and it was futile to try to conceive what his rich imagination would prompt him to do next. On the other hand, the freight engine on one side and the engine of the wrecker on the other cooped up the only able engine on the track, and made advance or retreat

impossible as long as the wrecker couldn't turn to and haul itself up on the track. But the Man refused to compromise. The division superintendent finally gave it up and started overland for the next telegraph station, ten miles away.

In the meanwhile matters were coming to a desperate crisis in the parade before the station at Solitaria. It was growing dark. Under the circumstances there was cause for excitement, although there was a line of brakemen, armed with lanterns, stretched out half a mile either way. It was generally agreed that the lamps in the cars should be left unlighted in deference to the opinion of the women, who thought lights would afford too good a mark, supposing the Man should decide to turn his attention to a little target practise. The engineers and express messengers lit theirs, and the headlights on the two middle engines were started, and threw a yellow glare on the cars before them. The Man paid no attention to matters of this kind, so long as he saw they did not interfere with his plans for operating his road.

About this time a couple of brakemen put their heads together and, getting in back of the tender of the express engine, began to throw chucks of coal through the window at the Man when he was telegraphing. They figured that it would make the Man mad and that he might exhaust his ammunition upon the tender. It did set him going for awhile and the sound of smashing glass, the crack of the revolver, and the spat of the bullets up against the tender roused considerable interest, especially among the women. Then the Man made up his mind not to shoot any more; they couldn't do him much harm, anyway, from behind the tender, and he decided to devote no more of his official time to them. So they knew no more about his supply of ammunition than before. Besides, the thing was beginning to be too much for the women in the cars, who got an idea from the noise that something was going on or was about to, and the conductors called the brakemen off. They were afraid they might get the Man too much excited.

As it got darker, however, the ideas of the men on the outside began to crystalize. About everything possible had been tried and failed. At 8:30 o'clock a determined minority decided to go gunning for the Man. It seemed a rather inhuman thing to do, but there was no knowing what was going to turn up. It was really a case of self-defense. Accordingly a messenger was sent across the fields to a farmhouse for a shotgun.

At this time a ridiculous thing happened. The Man went to sleep. This seems incredible until it is remembered that he had been up very late the night before arranging the schedule for his road. As for the men on the outside, they thought at first he was merely leaning forward over his instrument; then some one suggested that he might be asleep, but the crowd was against him, the popular theory being that he was probably playing some trick. The beams of one of the headlights streamed in the front window of the station and showed him very plainly. He made an interesting, if not entirely charming picture in the yellow light,—

especially his white face and his straggly black hair. If he had made the slightest move the crowd would have seen it; but he didn't. So after he had lain perfectly still for ten minutes many said that they were comfortably sure that he was really asleep. A young physician who watched him awhile said they couldn't wake him with a club,—it was one of the peculiar symptoms of what ailed him,—and suggested that now was the golden opportunity for those whose business it was, to gather him in without the slightest danger to themselves. There was a long and unanimous silence, during which the theory of subterfuge on the part of the Man gained ground. Finally the doctor said he would be one of two men to go in after him; a freight brakeman said he would be the other. They went to the rear of the station and opened a catch in a window where a piece of coal had broken out a light, raised the sash, and crawled in. The crowd kept watch of the Man, prepared to yell if he stirred. But he didn't stir. The two men crawled up behind the barricade, around in front where the headlight streamed in and jumped. Then the crowd came through the front windows, and the Man was gathered in.

Now this is the plain and unvarnished tale of how the Man at Solitaria ran the Great Western Road. There is no probability that he will resume the management. Nevertheless he inaugurated one improvement for which the traveling public should be grateful. The new Man at Solitaria has an assistant.

Among other good things in the October issue will be THE TRUMP CARD MITCH HELD, *By H. P. Holt.*

Mitch was "up" for eloping with another man's horse in a country where stealing a man's horse is as serious an offence as stealing his wife. He couldn't even have his choice between hanging and "gun branding." But—

KEY, RING AND SHERIFF

BY RAYMOND E. LAWRENCE

He wasn't sure, but he thought that he had killed a man in a saloon fight. Now, on his wedding day with the ceremony just two hours away, his happiness was about to go down before the law of compensation and an Idaho sheriff.

DOWN in the fat, fir-rimmed bottom lands of field and stream and shady cottonwood clump rests Snyderville, a farming town, well-fed, respectable, and small. East, the Cascades drowse through an Indian summer of hazy purples, grays and blue; and west, many miles beyond sight, the Pacific receives the setting sun. Lights will soon appear in the large square house back among the big cherry trees, and a crowd of the town's elite ascend the steps. Up the street stands the cement and feed store. A bit farther—then you are drawn by the evening influx of hungry Snydervillians into the "Home Restaurant."

Within the latter place the rattle of dishes, vociferous supper groups, and a hurrying waitress commingled cheerfully with kitchen smells and smoke; and at a rear table, ostensibly reading the bill of fare, but in truth as unconscious of its presence as he was of the plain gold band he had dropped, five minutes previous, to the cloth before him, sat Jess Webb.

The suddenness of the clear-sky bolt had, at first, stunned Jess.

His face, however, revealed little—a slight hardening of eye and jaw—steeliness a trifle more compatible with two small scars on cheek and forehead—that was all.

Only the great, clenched fist beneath the table could betray his tension and mind.

The sheriff, who sat on the other side, whose doubt had vanished, and whose stealthy glances heretofore had merged into a gaze of unwavering decision, leaned slightly forward now and looked Jess straight in the eyes—But this is getting ahead of the story.

When Dad Wright, owner of the Snyderville cement and feed store, that afternoon yelled: "Hey, Jess! Wonder what these fellers are tyin' to work off on to us?" the required one came from the rear of the building and found Dad signing up for a big packing-case the transfer wagon had brought. A little vigorous work with a hammer disclosed a shining roll-top desk.

"Well, since the gol-darned thing's here, an' I can't use two of 'em," observed Dad with over-careful deliberation, "I'll let you in as partner. What! 'Thanks,' did you say?" he snorted to Jess's attempted acknowledgment. "Huh! D'ye think fer a minute I'd let a wage-slave have *my* little gal? Not much!"

Thus did Webb become a partner in the business, for such was Dad

Wright's method of bestowing wedding gifts.

After Dad went home, Webb pulled from his pocket the ring which was to function that evening and gazed at it and the new desk key thoughtfully.

Later, locking up, he was greeted by Waldron, the banker, and accompanied down the street by Judge West; nodded familiarly to by the constable, and hailed by the "Bugle's" editor.

He was button-holed, questioned, and slapped on the shoulder.

The "Bugle" had followed his rapid rise; already it knew of his latest good fortune; and now would Mr. Webb kindly give his birthplace, age, and any other information he might deem of interest to its readers?

The data was given—prosaic fact and figure—but the vista which flashed behind his eyelids—the vista of soft pink, somber stretch, and distant red riot—the road of regeneration up which he had come—that was a vista incommunicable.

"Thanks, Mr. Webb," the editor was saying, "we will get this in our next edition."

Webb thrilled, hardly aware that the newspaper man departed, but not in anticipation of seeing his name in print—the promised write-up in itself was nothing—it was what the write-up signified.

The key and ring were symbolic of victory. Here *was* Victory! And he thrilled because he had won.

However, perhaps only he who has stopped in rags and drizzling darkness to gaze through the warmly-lighted windows of those with homes can appreciate fully the meaning to Jess of the recognition accorded him—and even Jess, himself, had almost forgotten.

Sprightly, big and boyish, he conquered the stairway to his room a moment later in a manner that always filled his landlady, good Mrs. Simpkins, with terrible forebodings.

"Them stairs is a-going to break down some day," was her usual prophesy on such occasions. "I've up an' told him so time and again, but he always fergits!"

Nor could she be blamed for her fears, considering that the only light thing about her roomer was his heart. And two hundred and fifteen pounds of six foot three energy *is* rather disquieting when it decides to bound up a nervous lady's stairway.

But this evening she prophesied nothing. When Jess came down some minutes later she was in the hall.

"Well, I guess I forgot again," he said contritely.

"It ain't a-huntin' nothin' a-tall!" she expostulated. Then, hurriedly: "My, but ain't you slicked up fit to kill!"

Mrs. Simpkins was losing a son—not that Jess held that distinction, but Mrs. Simpkins regarded him as almost one; and Mrs. Simpkins could never let him go to such a great function as a wedding without first inspecting his dress from head to feet.

But she did not see the force that lay in every line of him,—hands, bulging sleeves, and pose. It was a too good-natured force to show itself as force. She saw only a big, overgrown boy who needed looking after.

With amusement, Jess watched her

critical eye rove, and settle on his snug white collar and bow tie.

The tie failed to harmonize with her primness.

Jess was sent to the mirror, and as he struggled with the offending tie a conglomerate vision of hoodlum, tramp, sailor and cow-puncher, flitted before him, and a tinkle of glasses, boisterous laughter, a stetson-hatted tough reeling in song against a bar, "free-for-all" fights, phantasmagorias of seamen's boozing-kens, dusty cattlemen's saloons, "sociable" times on fishing boats, garish of color and sharp, leaped the years; but ever the fight took central position in the picture—first, last, and always, the inevitable fight!

He looked with a smile at the two small scars on his face, souvenirs of purple passages in the old, half-forgotten existence. "That kid was sure some customer!" he laughed to himself, as he finished his task.

And then Mrs. Simpkins descended upon him.

Such clumsiness had that worthy lady never before seen! The long-suffering bow tie was untied, retied, and tightened to the precise degree in one instant of nimble swiftness. Then Jess escaped.

"Comin back?"

"Sure," he answered, "suit-case, you know."

Tomorrow, he would take this suit-case, a wife, and various grains of rice on a honeymoon; and the exit from Snyderville would be vastly different from his entry.

Impossible, it seemed, as he stepped into the street, a clean-cut, spruce young man—impossible, that only three years before he, Jess Webb, had been the grimy hobo who slipped and slunk from a box-car into the "Brick Saloon" right there on the corner—slunk with free-lunch hopes, and was ushered out with instant and violent inhospitality. The two were irreconcilable.

But, the disreputable fellow persisted; Jess saw this youthful shade of his past "strike" the big, square house of the cherry trees—saw the Girl, home alone that day, cook him a meal such as he had not eaten in many a month— saw the "hard case" suddenly and most strangely transformed to a big, awkward boy who sat gingerly on the edge of his chair; whose hands worried him greatly, and who stammered at the frank-eyed gaze of the Girl as she sympathized with him on the hard lot of the unemployed—saw lastly, the youth depart, a self-abased, thoroughly ashamed and dreaming youth—ashamed that he, a hulking brute, should ask food from a little girl like her when he ought to be supporting himself and some one else too, and dreaming dreams that caused his brain to reel as if with wine.

Had the Girl brown hair? Had she worn a blue-and-white checkered apron? He did not know—then. Nor did he know that he had starved for love and grown hard and inured to its lack as a desert plant for water. He only knew that love had come, crowded the old bravado out, thrilled him with the vista of a new existence.

And now those dreams in which he floated down the steps of that house long ago, and but dimly aware that steps existed, had taken on the sub-

stance of reality. The comparison may be odd, but no more than the condemned murderer can fully realize the inevitableness of his doom could Jess realize before this evening that his dreams were dreams no longer.

Six o'clock—so much was concrete fact. Two hours more—for the wedding would be at eight!

He wanted to think—to linger on the wonder of it all: the respect shown him by his town, the permanence with which he had laid the ghosts of his reckless past, his partnership—Dad, the old rogue, probably already had told the Girl!

Thus ruminating, he entered the "Home Restaurant," went to his old table with a zestful "Sure, roast beef!" to the waitress's query, then promptly forgetting that the crowd in the place must delay his order at least twenty minutes, his fingers sought and brought out the ring.

It was fascinating, this symbol. It symbolized the final step in his regeneration!

The past was decently buried—left behind with relinquished associates. The old fights were fading into dream mists, and as he idly picked up the bill of fare to look for the pie list he noted with amusement his clean, smooth knuckles—in the old days those knuckles were habitually bruised and skinned.

A heavy set, mustached man, bronzed of face, gray-shirted, brown-suited and slovenly, sat down facing him, and shot forth a quick glance from under bushy brows.

Another glance followed—fleeting and portentious.

The man's presence was ominous, for Webb well knew the type. Nor did it require the recollection of absent-mindedly observing the fellow walk to the back of the room a moment previous, take a pistol from a valise and holster it beneath coat and arm, to tell him the type. He knew the species from of old. Further, if impressions counted for anything, he knew the brand—Idaho.

The individual who seemed so interested in him was an Idaho sheriff.

However, there was no need for uneasiness—the yellow newspaper clipping in his trunk settled all fear. Nevertheless, the clatter of kitchen, footsteps, voices, became on the instant a far-off din—meaningless as the blurred bill of fare he held with nervous hand and scanned but did not see.

The far-off, meaningless din took on meaning. It rose in volume. It surged and beat on his eardrums with raucous laughter and song. The room had turned into a bar. The old kaleidoscope of memory flashed swiftly again: Here, in all its garishness of color, came the drunken orgy, the free-for-all fight. There, bloody of knuckle, stood a speedily sobering young giant—dead, in the clutter of broken glass at his feet, lay a constable. Then, a sober youth swung out of the stary, dust-laden Idaho night to the rods of a passing freight.

He flung the vision from him. Foolishness, this funk over the mere presence of a sheriff, he told himself. Sheriffs must eat as well as any one else.

The sheriff fastened upon him a persistent gaze, which shifted vacantly as Jess glanced up, and with

slow disinterest the man began pulling his mustache.

A moment, and Jess knew he was being eyed again.

It angered him—for an instant he was impelled to smash the fellow in the face—at least ask him what the idea was; but reason and three years of respectability intervened.

The ridiculousness of the situation burst upon him. That he, Jess Webb, should fear was simply absurd!

It was laughable after all, the thought of a sheriff being after him! Why should he be the one in this place of many? As a matter of fact, was the sheriff really looking for any one at all? More than likely the poor "gink," as Webb termed him in mind, merely wanted to talk—some of those old chaps were pretty garrulous anyway—that was the reason for his confounded stares. Why, any other idea was preposterous, inconceivable! There was the newspaper item clipped shortly after coming to Snyderville; itself incontrovertible. It stated flatly, in substance:

"—While the true facts of the death of Constable Jackson in the saloon affray last Thursday are not known, the fractured skull points more to the blow of a bottle from behind than to a blow of a fist—although in the latter case concussion with the floor could possibly have been the cause. The drunkenness of all present precludes much hope, etc."

Yes, the bottle theory of the paper fitted in perfectly. In fact, the only strange thing about the whole matter was his failure to realize the truth at the time. The blow of a youth's fist! It was a joke now that he looked at it from the viewpoint of maturity—especially in sight of the fact that any one else of the drunken crowd might be the guilty man. Well, his conscience was clear; the boyhood scare was probably intended as a lesson; further, his years of unmolested endeavor and good, solid citizenship in the little town was in itself sufficient proof of his safety and innocence!

The regrettable part lay in the memories brought up by this slouching sheriff who must drift in with his Idaho air and old ghosts on this one night of all others, the wedding eve.

And then the two scars seemed to expand and glow, and all reasoning came to naught—the sheriff's furtive glances continued; when intercepted they fled, only to return with increasing persistence.

A sudden fury seized Jess; his scalp tightened; curious, old-time thrills swept through him—one good smash in the jaw—

But again his regeneration had asserted itself. His fighting instinct was under control. Calmly, he wondered what made the waitress so long, and he looked at the clock on the wall: six-ten—only five minutes, he noted, had passed since the man came!

Lowering his eyes, he encountered once more the other's, and his fist clenched beneath the table.

Perhaps the sheriff had been puzzled—but doubts were gone, now, for he was leaning forward straight of gaze and decisive!

The tick-tock of the clock fell slower; an eternity lay in the arc of the pendulum; and in that eternity between look and speech the groom-to-be saw all his glorious, roistering youth leap back,—the moonlit ocean, sun-drenched plain, stary Idaho

night; fights in dusty street and crowded saloon—exhilarating, flashing, whirlwind fights—and his muscles tightened, pulse quickened, brain judged distance—

But a voice held him, and the old reckless life was lost—the voice of the little girl of the big house held him, and he knew he would make no resistance, for no fugitive from justice must wed *her*.

"Say—" began the sheriff.

Jess Webb dropped the bill of fare and carelessly folded his arms.

"Er—thank yu," said the sheriff quickly, as he seized the relinquished slip like a toad catching flies. "Yu see," he added apologetically, the while swiftly scanning its items, "—yu see, I'm in some shakes of a hurry—train comes in less'n a half hour. Eh—must've been dreamin', did yu say? Wal, I reckon I won't dispute you none neighbor!"

THE WINGED SHRAPNEL, *By Fred O. Copeland,* is another story which will be included in the menu next month. It is the story of an invention dedicated to modern warfare. The winged shrapnel is stolen, and the thief is pursued by an innocent bystander whose latent ability as a detective has been aroused.

GENIUS PULLS A FLUKE

BY HANSELL CRENSHAW

Christopher thought that he could write a musical score that would make him heir to the mantle of Wagner. Others didn't think so, which was why life for him was just one bean sandwich after another.

CHRISTOPHER HARE stood beside the table in his shabby little room and gazed abstractedly at two small vials which he held, one in each hand. On one side of the room was a battered old piano. Both table and piano were littered with manuscript music in varying stages of composition or revision. Hare was tall, spare and prematurely gray, shabbily dressed, but with the face of an artist—a face seamed with care and disappointment yet potential of genuine creative genius.

A light knock came at the door. Hare furtively slipped the vials into his coat pocket, then went to the door and opened it. A motherly sort of woman entered and advanced a few steps.

"I hate to trouble you, Mr. Hare," she said, "but the agent is pressing me, and—your room rent is three months overdue. I have a chance to rent this room tomorrow for cash in advance if—"

Hare placed a rickety chair for her and took another himself.

"Sit down a moment, Mrs. Malone," he said, taking a letter from his pocket and handing it to her. "I shall leave you this afternoon and here is a letter to my wife and boy which I want you to mail. Mrs. Malone, I—I haven't even money to buy a stamp!"

"Where are you going?" the woman asked gravely.

Hare did not answer for a space and when he spoke it was with infinite weariness.

"To some strange place," he said. "I came to New York six months ago, thinking that I would get my opera, *Mariamne,* produced. One by one, all the managers have refused it except Sterne, and he wouldn't even see me. Then, as you know, I wrote a comic thing; but it was worthless. I'm not fitted to write trivial stuff. Three weeks ago I sent my *Mariamne* to Sterne through the mail. He hasn't so much as acknowledged it. No doubt the score is lost or destroyed—the score I toiled and starved and dreamed to write! But now I'm done—beaten. He buried his face in his hands.

"Don't be discouraged," said Mrs. Malone, after a pause. "Apply for work in a theatre, restaurant, movie. You can live that way till some one comes along capable of appreciating your operas."

"You don't understand," said Christopher Hare, looking up. "I can't read music readily enough to hold a job in New York. Then, too, I don't belong

to the union." He sighed wearily.

"Then teach," counseled the woman.

"Who would study under so shabby a master in so shabby a place?" he protested. "Besides, I don't play at all well. I'm no more a pianist than Wagner was. I am a creative artist. No; I advertised for pupils, but none came."

Mrs. Malone rose.

"Try a little longer," she advised him. "I'll not turn you out. You may yet get a hearing. Who can tell?"

"You are a good woman," said the composer, rising, "and I thank you now for all your goodness to me. I can't even pay what money I owe you, much less what gratitude. But this pitiful thing I can do." He handed her a folded paper. "I assign all rights to my manuscripts to you. They are probably not commercially worth the paper they're written on. But if they are worth anything, it will be a great deal."

"No," said Mrs. Malone, laying the paper on the table, "I can't take your manuscripts this way for a mess of pottage. Take them along with you, if you must go. You can send me my money any time."

"Good-bye," said Christopher, taking her hand.

"Good-bye," said she, "and better luck."

Mrs. Malone went out and closed the door. Hare sat down at the table and produced the two vials. He put them on the table and spoke addressing them.

"Deadly nightshade!" he said, taking up one of the bottles, "you are what I need—enough to kill ten failures."

He put the vial to his lips and drained it. Then he picked up the other bottle.

"And you, juice of the poppy!" he continued, "I need you, too."

He swallowed the contents of this vial, also, and sat staring before him for some seconds.

"Well, I've done it!" he said at length, and fell face down across the table.

A brisk knock came at the door. Christopher made no response and the knock was repeated. Then the door was thrown open and Mrs. Malone burst into the room, holding a letter in her hand. She stopped abruptly when she saw Christopher. Then she ran to him and shook him by the shoulder.

"Mr. Hare—Mr. Hare!" she cried. "Look! A letter from Sterne."

"A letter?" said Christopher, rousing himself.

"Yes—maybe an acceptance," she answered.

"What does he say?" said Christopher, taking the letter and listlessly opening it.

He looked at the letter a moment then suddenly rose unsteadily to his feet.

"What's this!" he exclaimed, reading from the letter: "Your *Mariamne* a masterpiece—a second Madame Butterfly—inclosed find check on advance royalties in the sum of one thousand—"

He dropped the letter and slowly lowered himself into a chair.

"What have you done?" Mrs. Malone demanded.

"What a fate!" cried Christopher, ignoring her. "Here I am with suc-

cess and happiness within my very grasp, but doomed to die."

He raised a shaking hand and pointed to the empty vials on the table.

"Maybe something can be done!" said the woman quickly. Then she hurried from the room and down the stairs.

"'A masterpiece—a second Butterfly!'" Christopher quoted, "yet I shall not live to hear it. Oh, God!"

He sat staring at the letter and check. Presently the door opened and Mrs. Malone entered followed by Dr. Darwin Bernard. Bernard was an intelligent but hard-faced man of fifty. A poorly paid experience in medicine had made him a misanthrope. He put his hat and medicine bag on the table and picked up the vials, reading the labels.

"Laudanum and tincture of belladonna! Enough to kill a dozen fool musicians."

He raised Christopher's upper eyelid with a finger, then felt his pulse.

"Is there anything to be done?" the musician asked.

'No," said the doctor, picking up his hat and grip.

"You're not going to stand by and let the man die without—"

"There's nothing to be done," said Bernard brusquely.

"Is there no antidote? Must he die?"

"He ought to die," said the physician, putting on his hat and going to the door. "I live below him here, and God knows that any man who makes the noises he does on that old rattle-trap piano night and day does not deserve to live—"

"Monster—beast!" cried the woman.

"But," continued Bernard, ignoring her, "by some diabolic trick of fortune the damned fool has taken two poisons that are the exact antidotes, the exact antagonists of each other. The belladonna counteracts the opium and the opium counteracts the belladonna!"

'You mean—you mean—" Christopher gasped, appalled.

"I mean that except for a fit or two of vomiting, you will not suffer, but will continue to live and make life a continual hell for all those who must exist within earshot of your damnable efforts at out-DeBussying DeBussy!"

With this the physician left the room, banging the door behind him. Meantime Christopher Hare stood up and clasped Mrs. Malone's hand, swayed by feelings too strong for speech.

In the next issue: *THE DISINTERMENT OF* MOSES,*By Jean Le Gro Bisson.* In this story, a reporter and a professor invade a cemetery at midnight to exhume the body of the late Moses.

MARS, HUMORIST

BY P. F. NOWLAN

A man may keep a girl waiting forty-four minutes without losing his standing. But forty-four years is a long time between calls.

THE general looked up from his map. He took off his glasses, a trifle impatiently, and wiped them.

"*Ach,*" he soliloquized, "these French peasants build their windows so small! One must be a cat in order to see on a dark day. Ho, Schneider!"

An orderly entered, clicked his heels and saluted.

"Move my table to the light," said the general. "No, not so. Turn it around—so. That is good."

The orderly clicked his heels, saluted and withdrew.

Occasionally the window rattled and there was a thunder of guns, a sound which never ceased entirely. At times came lulls in the furious roar of the batteries just beyond the hills, but during these, the rumble of the deep-voiced forty-twos was audible miles down the river.

The general turned to his work again. With one forefinger he kept his place in the report. With the other he searched the map. When he had found the desired point, he would compare notes and pass on systematically to the next item.

But his concentration cost him an effort. *Ach,* if those lazy raindrops would not thump so mournfully on the windowsill. It distracted him, and the realization of this was irritating. Finally, with a gutteral of mild impatience, he pushed back the report and the map and let his eyes wander to the dripping eaves across the street. So fine was the rain that it was almost a mist. It collected rather than fell on the roofs. The general noted idly that the sentry pacing back and forth in the mud puddle, behind the fringe of drops which fell from the projecting thatch of the colonel's quarters, was a very wet and unhappy sentry.

It was a gloomy day—a gloomy war too, so unlike the victorious dash of forty-five years before. They had met gallant resistance then, it was true, but the enemy's bravery only added a meed of glory to the machine-like precision of Bismark's conquest.

But now! It was a great shock. This military machine, after a half-century's tuning up to an efficiency which, in the early stages of the war, had astounded its own creators—now—it was unbelievable—yet really it seemed to be slowing up in its drive on Paris. It stumbled, at times it actually staggered as it struggled on. And the cost in men—*Gott!* could it really be that they would not reach Paris.

But this was not all that contributed

to the general's gloom. There was a memory. He had been fighting it down all day, ever since he had moved forward his headquarters to the village, the same village in which he had spent six weeks in 1871.

There was a little old house at the lower end of the street. It had a thatched roof like the others. It had been the home of Lisette.

Ach, how vivid was that picture! With a rush, the general's memory swept back. Once more he was the young lieutenant of Uhlans, bowing, half mockingly, half seriously, before the scorn of that glorious young creature, fragrant in her new-found womanhood. He had quartered himself in her father's house forthwith, with the secret vow to turn her scorn to something sweeter.

Gradually he had seen her pretended loathing turn to interest, mischief, tenderness, and finally to utter surrender.

Then, as he had known full well from the beginning, as surely as it had never entered her mind, there had to come an end. He was ordered home. That parting had unnerved him. Actually he had to tear her arms from around his neck. Also, he had found himself promising to return, and salving his conscience with the thought that perhaps he might after all. But he never did.

What had become of Lisette, the general wondered. Today—he smiled grimly—a "maternal" government would solve her problem for her. She would be the widow, say, of Anton Henri, a worthy soldier of the republic, who had fallen in battle. What if no one in the village ever had met or heard of Anton Henri? That would not alter the fact that the record of the marriage would be there in black and white—right next to that of the similar marriage of Henri Anton! And the child would receive its education at the expense of the republic.

The child—had it been a girl or a boy? Somehow, he felt it was a boy. Was he still alive, fighting against his father's country—a private, an officer?

Perchance Lisette herself, his—he almost said wife—was still alive. Yes, he sighed, it would have been better had he returned and fulfilled his obligation to Lisette. She would have been—nay, she had been—more of a wife to him than the late Frau General.

He was brought back to the present by one of those acute silences, when for seconds at a time it happened that no gun was fired. He gazed out the window. The day was coming to a close. The gloom thickened. *Gott im Himmel,* he would do it—visit the deserted home of Lisette. He pounded his fist on the table and arose.

"Ho, Schneider! My cloak, my helmet! I will be gone half an hour. Tell Colonel Schmitt. No, I go alone. I am not leaving the village."

If gloom had oppressed him throughout the day it possessed him utterly when, drawing his cloak closely about him, he stood and gazed at the desolate house that once had been Lisette's. Surely nought but memories were protected by those shutters. No one was living there now.

He strode over to the door, then paused with his hand on the knob, for an auto had roared into the village

and was skidding to a standstill before his headquarters up the street. Ha! a messenger leaped out and dashed up the steps. It must mean something of importance, this haste. He had better return at once.

For a second the general hesitated, then, to his own astonishment, he obeyed that desire to turn the knob, without intending to do so. It yielded. He opened the door and strode into the blackness of the hall.

Three steps he took, then a flash seared his very eyeballs, a blade passed through his stomach.

The startled sentry down the street saw the body of his general hurtled through the doorway and lie limp in the road. And following it, there gushed from the desolate house a very avalanche of Frenchmen, led by a demoniac officer whose sword dripped red, and whose automatic belched a stream of lead.

It was hot while it lasted,—ten minutes perhaps, for the surprise had been complete, and there had been but a half-company of Germans in the village in addition to the attachés of the headquarters. There were no reinforcements, because right and left of the village other French troops, sprung from nowhere, had swept on beyond it.

Schneider, the orderly, lined up with the other prisoners, saw the body of the general deposited on the steps of a house. Two French officers stood beside it, one of them the demoniac officer, now calm and quite human looking.

"This is the *boche*," he remarked, indicating the body of the general with a movement of his foot, "who blundered into the house and forced me to attack before all my men had come up. We had disposed of the sentry, my Colonel, and sneaked up the ravine and thus into the back of the house. *Ma foi!* I have killed many men since the *boches* started this mad work, but I never expected to kill one in the house where I was born. War plays strange tricks." He laughed and rolled a cigarette.

Schneider noted with mild curiosity that this officer, were he about twenty-five years older, would be remarkably like the general in appearance. But of Lisette he knew naught.

Next month: PICKLES IN PERSPECTIVE, *By J. Bernard Lynch*, the story of an elderly Romeo who sells pickles for a living and has a healthy disrespect for Cupid.

AN AFTERMATH OF '98

BY A. H. BLAKE

A hero by birth, a hero by training, and a hero in activity, Robert's batting average easily tops the three hundred mark in this story.

N' the Jackson limped into port with 'er hole in her bow through which you could ha' shoved a shark. An' the captain lost his job."

"Why?" came the inquiry.

"They claim he was drunk at the time," the old lighthouse keeper explained. "Wal, I dunno. He's a drinking man all right; but I lays the wreck to the current. Look at it now! Racin' like a mill pond! That's a natural graveyard o' ships."

The youth raised his binocular and gazed with new interest on the distant mouth of Diablo Path—that narrow, turbulent passage between the two islands. His uncle was right. *That* entrance of the pass was certainly indicative of danger. All was desolation. A barren, cliff-crested coast frowned down on the surging sea which poured into the tortuous, shoal-strewn passage. Foam eddied about black, sombre rocks, which, with the ebb tide, now towered above the breakers. At full tide these titan teeth would be submerged and consequently doubly dangerous for unpiloted craft. To guard against this, as well as to outline the limits of clear passage and deep water, a huge buoy rose sentinel-like on their outskirts.

Fleming finally lowered his glasses. "Do you know," he pondered, "I sometimes fancy that buoy moves. Even now it appears closer in than this morning."

"That's account o' the low tide exposing the rocks," explained his uncle. "No," he continued, "the buoy's *located* right. Trouble is 'taint sufficient. The shipping's increased wonderful since Spain ceded us this South Pacific island. Mor'n five year back an agreement was reached with the French, who own Juano Island over there, to properly mark both entrances o' Diablo Path so's the liners could navigate it safely and cut off the three hundred extra miles around the islands. Wal, we done our part. Old Dewey Beacon shore lights up *this* end o' the passage. But them French ain't did nothin' but promise and cling to that ancient, good-for-nothing buoy."

"Their's seems the more dangerous of the two entrances," Fleming said.

"Dangerous! Wal, besides the Jackson's narrow escape, five good American ships have foundered there. It's shore time Uncle Sam was assertin' hisself. Why, there beyant but one skipper in these waters as will dare navigate that pass after dark, and that's that half-cracked Captain Hernandez."

At the mention of the Spaniard, the

youth's face hardened and, for a moment, his deep blue eyes flared. Old Gordon glanced up and, catching the grimace, chuckled.

"I don't see what I've done to him," Fleming complained, "yet he's seemed to hate me ever since I set foot on the islands. Some day I'm going to forget he's Anglicia's uncle and guardian."

"He don't want you for a relation, that's shore," agreed the old man. "He's a nasty temper, boy. You'd best be keerful o' him."

"His temper be damned," retorted Fleming. "I shan't let it interfere with my intentions toward Anglicia."

He descended the ladder of the lighthouse and stood looking across the waters to the French possessions. He watched the afterglow fade into violet, saw the lights of Los Garos, opposite him, begin to twinkle. Still he lingered expectantly.

At last the movement of a slight figure on the farther shore rewarded him, and, springing into a ready punt, he pushed off.

"Anglicia," he chided, "you're a little late."

"Captain Hernandez was fretful," the girl explained. "Too much wine again." There was the ready gesture of the Latin in her expression.

"Leave off unpleasant subjects," the stalwart American suggested. He gazed down on her diminutive form and smiled. "Come," he said.

To his surprise, the girl shuddered, and her dark, gazelle-like eyes sought his. "Robert!" she exclaimed, "we must meet no more. It is dangerous."

"Why," he faltered, "what's the trouble now, Anglicia?"

"My— I cannot explain," she answered. "But already I have forgotten vows sworn to on the crucifix."

"Anglicia!" he exclaimed; "what is the mystery of your uncle's animosity toward me? What is it you fear? What are these vows you hint at?"

The girl's finely chiseled face lost its glow. Her eyes were raised to his. "Do not ask me, Robert," she pleaded.

"But I do ask you!" he answered. "I've a right to know. I have done naught that he should hate me so. Why should we part merely to assuage his unjust hatred?"

"I cannot explain," she insisted.

"Then you do not care," he returned. "Admit it. You do not care!"

"I care, but I also fear, Robert. It might mean your death."

For answer, he drew her close. "As for that," he bantered, "I've as many lives as a cat. If that's all—"

Broad brown hands flung off his encircling arms. He felt himself seized and whirled aloft. "American vermin!" a voice hissed, "take warning. Next time you die!" Then he was hurled unexpectedly into the channel waters.

Arising to the surface, Fleming struck out for the shore. Filled with a wild rage, he scrambled out. He found no one was in sight.

His first impulse was to seek his assailant and satisfaction; but calmer judgment convinced him that such a course would only add to the unhappiness of the girl. He quietly entered the dory and returned to the nearby lighthouse. To his uncle he was noncommittal, merely explaining that he had received an unanticipated bath. But, having retired, he lay staring at the

lights of Los Garos and wondering. Slowly he re-assembled events since his arrival from Australia two months before. How uninteresting the islands had then seemed. He had planned to continue to America by the next boat. Then he had met the little Castilian maiden with her raven hair and glorious skin. And suddenly—the glamour of the islands had caught him. The brilliance of their foliage, the glory of their sunsets, the constantly changing hues of the ever restless seas, as reflected in her, had become wonderful. And the subtle perfumery of her tantalizing elusiveness had drawn him—maddened him, even to daring her uncle's emphatic, if unjust objections. Sometimes he felt that she cared. And yet— He fell asleep determining to solve the riddle.

"Uncle Klem," said Fleming next morning, "is there a ship due today?" As he spoke, his binocular again swept past the far mouth of Diablo where the huge buoy rode just off the shoals. Beyond it, far out on the edge of the arc in the purple Pacific, a slight blur soiled the azure.

"Due last night, lad," the light keeper informed him. "She's the Persian Queen out o' Sydney."

"Then if that is she I see approaching, she won't be in before dark." He put up the glasses. "Guess I'll visit Los Garos on Juano, a while."

"Take the launch with you, lad. It's far easier than rowing agin' the current."

"Thanks; I will," Fleming replied as he descended toward it.

He found Los Garos semi-deserted. He traversed its narrow, squalid streets disinterestedly until he reached the Hotel Felicia. There the Saxon invectives of a man in U. S. Naval uniform attracted him.

"I tell you, it's an outrage," the officer was exclaiming to a sympathetic auditor with whom he moved away. "No right to suspend a man like—hic!—this. Because I was—hic! easy with the crew—hic!—'sno sign I wasn't navigating properly. Channel was improperly marked. Helmsm'n an' I both saw it; but—hic!—Jackson h'd already struck."

"Drunken ass!" asserted one of a group of Latin bystanders. "As though the investigation didn't disprove him. He was drunk at the time!"

Fleming started. Then he stared after the officer. Instantly he recalled the story his uncle had related. The accident had occurred just prior to Fleming's arrival. The gunboat Jackson had struck the shoals of Diablo near the buoy one dark night and barely succeeded in making Los Garos. As the result of Captain Corbitt's excuse, and because of other wrecks, an investigation had been conducted. The only finding had been inebriety on his part, and, to his crew's indignation, a new commander had been assigned to the Jackson.

Fleming paused unwittingly to listen.

"Why is it," a voice in the throng presently asked, "that it is always American ships that founder? First, the Flora Barton sank; next, the Martin was wrecked; then the Venus and Friscoan; and now the Jackson barely escapes."

"Why?" the vindictive voice of Captain Hernandez responded. "Yankee stupidity! The pigs are incompe-

tent. They have been over-rated!"

Despite himself, Fleming wheeled. "I think," he retorted, "that '98 should have taught you better than that!"

The drink-flushed Spaniard scowled evilly. "That war was won by treachery," he sneered. "My country now prepares. Soon she will strike. And she will win. Man for man Yankees will not fight. They are cowards."

"That," declared Fleming, "is a lie!"

The interested spectators looked askance. Several moved back. The captain staggered and his face became livid with fury. His eyes gleamed. "Yankee cur!" he hissed, "I will prove it!" Abruptly he launched a blow at the American.

Fleming, quicker-witted, had anticipated this. As the Spaniard's limb flayed the air, he ducked cleverly; then his arm shot upward. Captain Hernandez dropped!

With an oath, the Latin arose. A white welt was branded on his cheek. His eyes were bubbling vitrol now. His hand sought his waist; a long knife glittered in his hairy fist.

Quickly assuming the offensive, Fleming leaped high. French fashion he kicked the knife from the infuriated seaman's hand. With another right-hand smash, he laid the captain flat. The Spaniard, unable to rise, squirmed and writhed in pain. Standing over him, the youth addressed those about. "Take charge of him," he ordered. "When he recovers, tell him that Americans are still competent!" With a smile, he turned and entered the hotel for dinner. Afterwards, he very indifferently engaged the French hotelkeeper in a game of chess.

Fleming, however, was not comforted over the adventure. True, he had reversed the result of the former meeting. But he was farther than ever from a solution of the mystery; and, as he well knew, he had aroused a foe whose former animosity would leap into deadly hatred; who would stoop to any depths for revenge. He was thinking, too, of Anglicia—the effect it would have on her regard.

As he strolled forth, an old Gasconian who had witnessed the encounter, accosted him. The American should have a care, he advised. The captain was furious over the humiliation; and when aroused, the captain was a most dangerous man.

Fleming smiled indolently as he meandered onward. He felt fully competent to handle the captain's *assaults*. It wasn't of that he was worrying. The captain— Abruptly his thoughts ceased. Unconsciously, he had wandered beyond the village and now had a clear view of the passage. At the far entrance of Diablo Path, a schooner, outward bound, had stopped beside the buoy. The lines of that two-master were well known to Fleming. It was Captain Hernandez's Barcelona!

"Going out, is he?" chuckled the American. "A queer time of day to set out for the fishing banks! Well, I'll make hay while I've the opportunity. Here's to find out what Anglicia now thinks," and he hastened away.

To his surprise, her dark eyes held grief, not indignation. They were red from weeping.

"Oh, Robert!" she exclaimed. "That you should have done this! He has

been drinking much; and he has sworn against you. Should he find you here—"

"Then do not let him," he bantered. "Come strolling with me. It is safe. I saw the Barcelona outward bound."

"Yes," she confirmed, as she followed. "But I fear his going, Robert."

"Why?" he questioned.

"Because he is not himself. He took cable and hoists; and he said, 'When I take these, Yankees always die!' What could he have meant, Robert?"

"Some nonsense, probably," laughed Fleming. "We'll not worry over it." They had approached the launch. "Sit in the boat and we will drift out beyond the lighthouse. We did not conclude our former conversation."

The sun was sinking and a golden glow was shimmering the sea. In the turquoise sky overhead, was a sprinkling of silvery stars. Shoreward, Los Garos, squatty and squalid, was frayed against a creamy, crescent beach. Opposite it, rose Dewey Beacon in sentinel whiteness. All else was bronze desolation.

The youth beheld it all with dreamy eyes. "It is like a picture, Anglicia," he murmured. "Behind us is the vastness of old ocean; ahead, Los Garos, nestling among the dunes. Beyond it, lie the rocky wastes, then the blue Pacific again. Note that heavy smudge far out upon it. That is the smoke of a ship due to steam through Diablo Path in two hours with news from the southmost world. It's a passenger ship—the Persian Queen."

"The Persian Queen," she purled; "it is a beautiful name."

He bent forward eagerly, affectionately. "But not so beautiful as my—"

He stopped abruptly. She had suddenly blanched and shuddered. He gazed at her anxiously.

"Persian Queen," she repeated. "Is the Persian Queen an American ship, Robert?"

"Yes—why—what—" Once more he stopped. Memory of her statement regarding her uncle's assertion: '*Yankees always die,*' returned. Instinctively, his eyes sought the buoy. They rested there. He straightened. He stared entranced; then he turned. "Anglicia!" he commanded, "take my glasses and examine the buoy!"

He heard her gasp when she had obeyed. Her eyes sought his, terror filled. Her bosom heaved convulsively. She seemed weak with terror.

"What do you see?" he demanded.

"The buoy!" she gasped, "is a hundred yards within the shoals!"

"Good God! It is not fancy then! And the Persian Queen due there by dark!"

He sprang to the engine and shoved the spark plug up. Rapidly he whirled the power wheel. Chug! Chug! the motor responded. Fleming sighed in relief. He turned her toward the channel mouth. She ran smoothly for five hundred yards. Then—with a protesting sigh—the engine died!

Astounded, Fleming sprang to the power wheel. He started the machinery once more; again it died. Muttering uneasily now, he worked. Again and again, he whirled the power wheel. It started but to die. Put! Put! it would begin; then it would miss. Frantic, he tested the battery. It was true. The coils! All proved intact. He examined every part. All

was perfect. He could not understand.

Of a sudden, it dawned upon him. He leaped to the storage tank. With trembling hands he removed the plug. His face became waxen with the confirmation of his suspicion. "Angiicia!" he cried. "The petrol tank is empty!"

Simultaneously, their eyes sought the fartherest entrance of Diablo Path. Beyond it, in the last glint of falling luminary, the now clear outlines of a great ocean liner were visible. It was a swiftly growing thing—shifting, sliding inward toward the entrance of swirling current and yawning rocks. The day was fading fast. The channel already was growing obscure. Even now the submerged shoals were almost invisible.

Aghast, Fleming glanced at the girl. Her cheeks were colorless; her eyes seemed glazed; she stared unmoving.

Then the coral surged back to her face. He saw the tension of her body. She turned with a cry: "Robert! We must save them!"

"We cannot," he answered. "We are helplessly adrift. There are no oars with which to reach the shore. If we could but get there, I could run to the other entrance in time. As it is, we will probably be lost, also."

"Swim it!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Robert! Go! Go before it is too late!"

The tide was going out. It was fast bearing the boat oceanward. Another half hour would find it far out at sea. And there was no fuel aboard, no oars. No oars—he turned to her. "What is this you ask? Leave you here—helpless?"

"Yes," she answered. "There are many to be saved. I am but one. Go!"

"I will not!" he asserted. "It means your death. I love you. I could not."

She faced him, passion swept. "You must go. You must! I see it all now. This is the captain's work. It is murder—murder! It must be undone. I could not live if it were not. Show your love by saving them."

"But—but—" he protested.

"Go," she pleaded. "Do your duty to them, to me. I can trust in God. Go!"

He stared at her. Her eyes were compelling. He faltered no longer. He kissed her lips and sprang overboard.

The swift current caught him the moment he arose. Before he could right himself to fight, it threw him back against the boat, bruising him. For a second his senses reeled and he felt all growing black. Then he heard a cry, and saw Anglicia's frightened face above. Already she was repentant, fearful, and calling him back. She held out her hand for him to grasp. But now his head was clearing and his determination surging. Heedless of the heavy waves breaking over him, he set his teeth and faced the task. Slowly, he overcame the tide and made headway. Breathing huskily, he fought. Inch by inch, foot by foot, he advanced. Once out of the trough of the sea, his progress was rapid. Nearer, nearer the island he drew. Soon he reach the rocks of the entrance and sprang upon them. He had reached shore with less effort than anticipated. He was overjoyed. It was simple now. Just a mile of running to the other entrance.

He turned to wave to Anglicia and missed his footing. When he attempted to recover, he slipped on the

slime and fell heavily. He heard a loud pop; blood rushed to his head, nauseating him. He groaned with pain.

Desperately, he fought to steady his senses. He attempted to lift a foot and gasped with increased pain. Glancing down, he understood. Already his badly dislocated ankle was swelling and, despite his efforts, his head was thumping. He cried aloud in despair and sat down.

Then, across his memory swept Anglicia—her entreaty, her peril. He *must* go on; must act quick. Abruptly, he arose. He fought the pain and his reeling senses, staggered a few paces and fell. On! On! He gritted his teeth and arose again. He stared across the island to the other entrance three miles distant. He would never get there in time. He *knew* it. What could be done? Despair clutched deep, but hope refused to yield.

Ah, he had it! Back to the water he crawled and plunged into it. Immediately it revived him. Straight for the lighthouse he swam. Reaching it, he hobbled up the stairs. "Uncle Klem! Uncle Klem!" he called.

No answer.

"Uncle Klem!" he shrieked.

The startled old man opened the door.

"Quick!" ordered Fleming. "The oars for the punt!"

"Why, lad, what's—where's the—"

"Never mind!" interrupted Fleming. "Later. Now the oars!"

The old man saw the white, set face and turned. At once he reappeared with the oars.

"Get in the punt with me," ordered Fleming.

Wondering, the old man automatically obeyed. Fleming snatched from him one of the oars. "Row!" he cried. "Row as you've never rowed before. Row to save the Persian Queen!"

Old Gordon's face became an interrogation, but he seemed to realize the uselessness of questioning. Together, they bent to the task of fighting the current; Fleming telling between strokes, what had happened. The old lighthouse keeper gasped as he listened. The comprehension seemed to rekindle all the stamina of his youth. With the strength of an iron man he pulled, calling curses on Hernandéz as he stroked. The punt fairly skimmed the water. They beat the liner to the rocks, and waved her down. To her wondering commander they explained the peril. His face grew very grave as he heard.

"Thank God, it wasn't another catastrophe," he said. "This trip has been full of them. First day out, we lost a man; next, the engines broke down; we drifted twenty hours; then, that tragedy just out there."

"Tragedy?" Fleming inquired, as old Gordon took the wheel to steer the ship through the pass.

"We sank a schooner," the captain explained,—"the Barcelona. There were two dagos in it and they came direct for us. At first, we thought they intended to turn aside, and we held our course; but they continued to bear down, one of them in the bow shaking his fist. He must have been a crazy man, expecting his toy craft would thrown the Queen aside. It was too late then for us to swerve. The Queen swept clear over them. We stopped and got out the lifeboats.

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It was useless. No bodies came up with the wreckage."

Fleming turned away to hide his relief. It was the easiest solution of a harassing problem.

To his intense joy, Anglicia greeted them as he stepped ashore. A trading schooner, bound for Los Garos, had picked her up.

"Captain Hernandez?" she inquired.

"He is dead," Fleming answered.

"My premonition was correct then," she said. "Come."

She led him to her home and direct to the captain's room, where hung a picture—a young Spaniard in naval uniform.

"Captain Hernandez!" exclaimed Fleming.

"No," she replied. "Lieutenant Phillipa Hernandez—his twin brother and my father. You have wondered at my actions. Now listen to the story."

Briefly, she sketched it—a tragedy of the past. The Hernandez family was one of the first of Spain. There were twin boys—Rodolfo and Phillipa. The former a wild youth of violent temper, had become a rover of the seas. Phillipa had entered the navy and married. Soon after Anglicia's birth, the war with America had started. Rodolfo had returned to Spain to offer his services to the government. With his return came news of Cevera's defeat and the death of Phillipa. The shock had killed their mother. Anglicia's mother, a frail, beautiful woman, had died soon after.

Rodolfo had been wild to avenge his family and his country, but humiliating peace for Spain had quickly followed. Swearing eternal vengeance on all Americans, he had taken Phillipa's orphaned child and come to Juano. He had reared little Anglicia to womanhood under constant tutorage as to why she should hate the Yankees. Since their residence there, many American ships had been lost. Each time, the captain had gloated; yet she had never dreamed of connecting him with the wrecks.

With Fleming's arrival, and her friendliness toward him, the captain's temper commenced to boil. Repeatedly, he had upbraided her, and sworn to kill the American. Yet the captain himself had been the one to die.

"And so I see," she concluded, "that hate but ends in death. Love alone brightens the world."

"And love," whispered Fleming as he drew her close, "forbids a boundary line."

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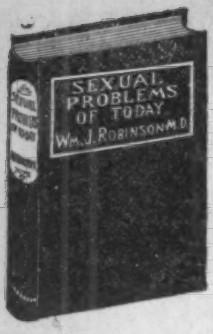

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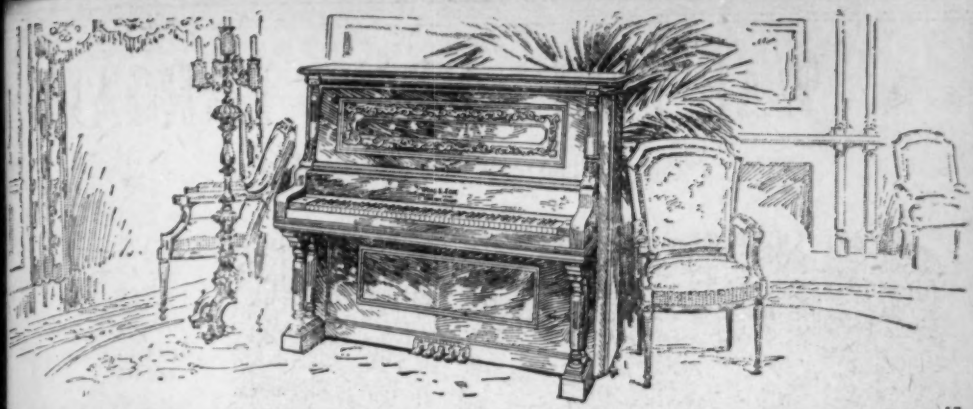

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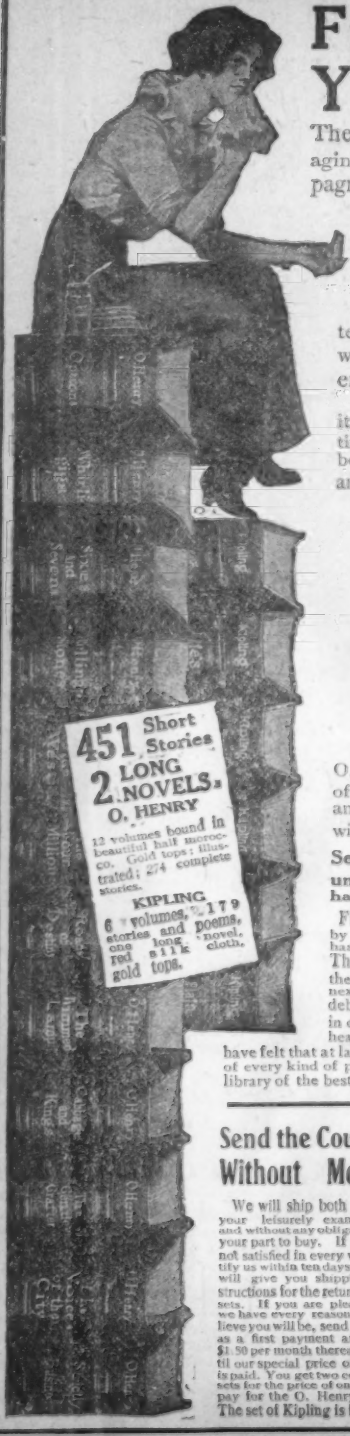
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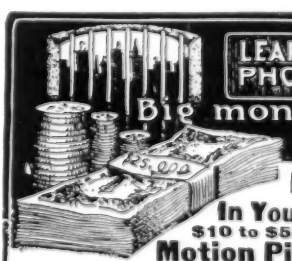

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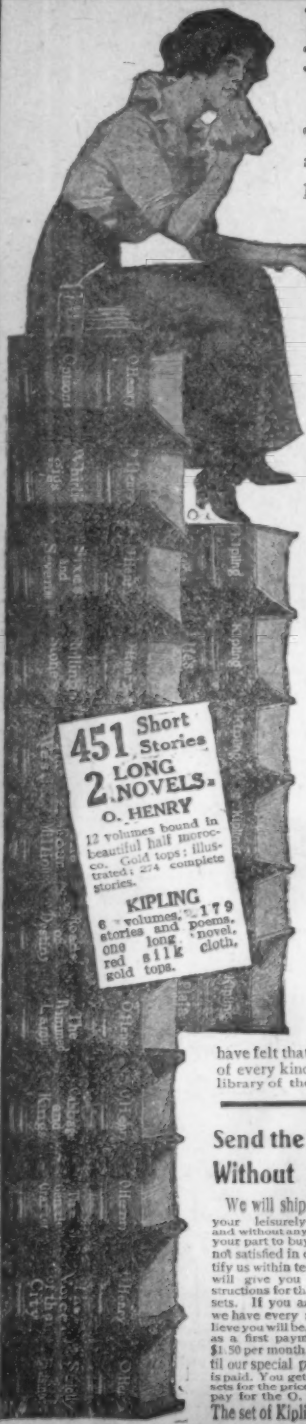
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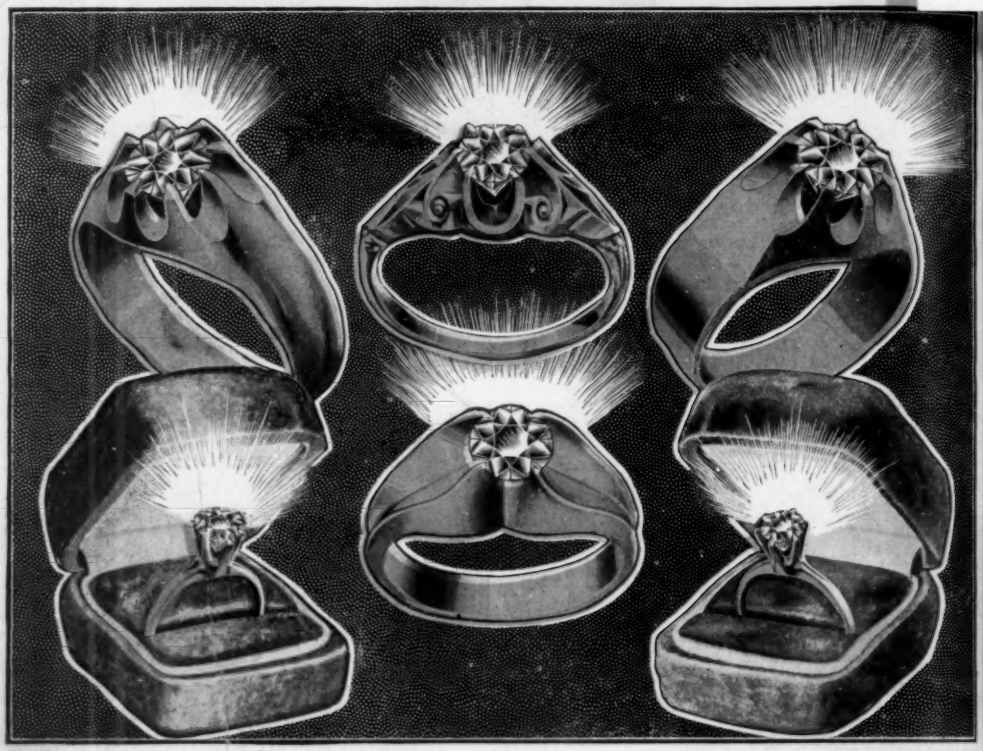

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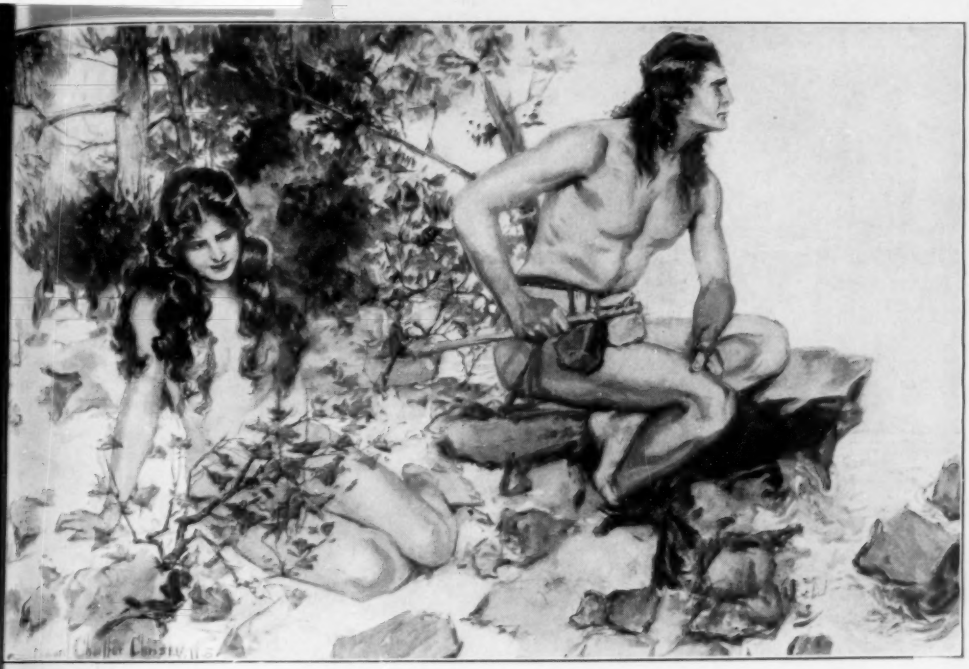

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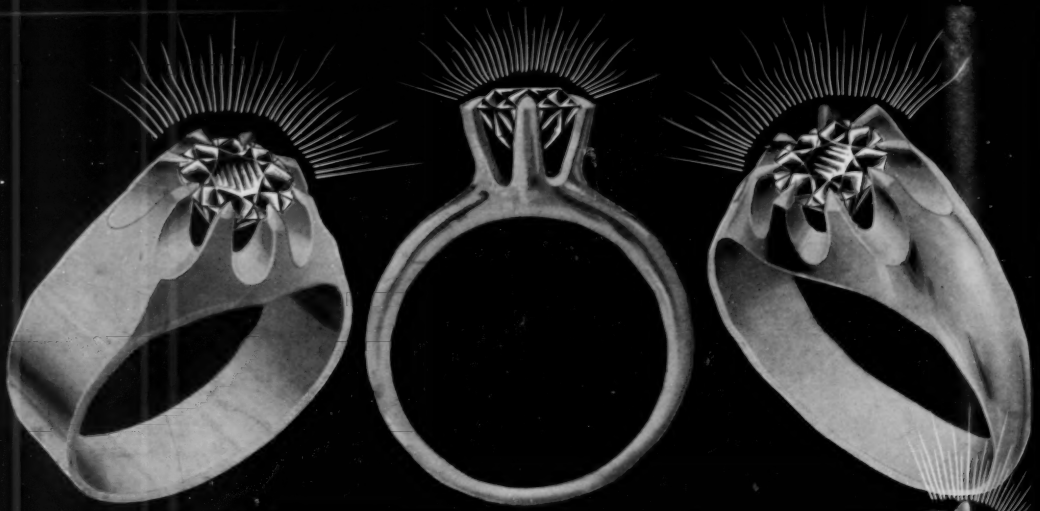

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You know and I know that small investors have made stupendous fortunes—men who, guided by judgment, and courage, have placed their funds direct into creative enterprises at their inception and thus reaped **full benefit** of the earning power of money. Today opportunity on bended knee is entreating the small investor to accept her favors—and those who heed the insistent call are achieving fortunes.

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Learn the REAL EARNING POWER of Your Money

The real earning power of your money is not the paltry 3 per cent. to 5 per cent. paid by banks or corporations who have their future **behind** instead of in **front** of them.

"Investing for Profit" reveals the enormous profits bankers make, and shows how one can make the same profit—it demonstrates the **real** earning power of your money—the knowledge that financiers and bankers hide from the masses—it explains HOW small investors are making big fortunes and WHY they are made.

This and other valuable financial information is yours—it's free for six months for the asking.

How to Determine the Value of Different Investments

There are thousands of salaried people today who have a small sum laid aside or who can invest a small amount each month—but who realize that they do not know how to determine the value of the different classes of investments that are offerad to them daily. This condition has created a demand for a publication or institution whose express object is to help direct and guide the small investor. "Investing for Profit" is the result of a pressing need, and will be worth hundreds—even thousands of dollars to you.

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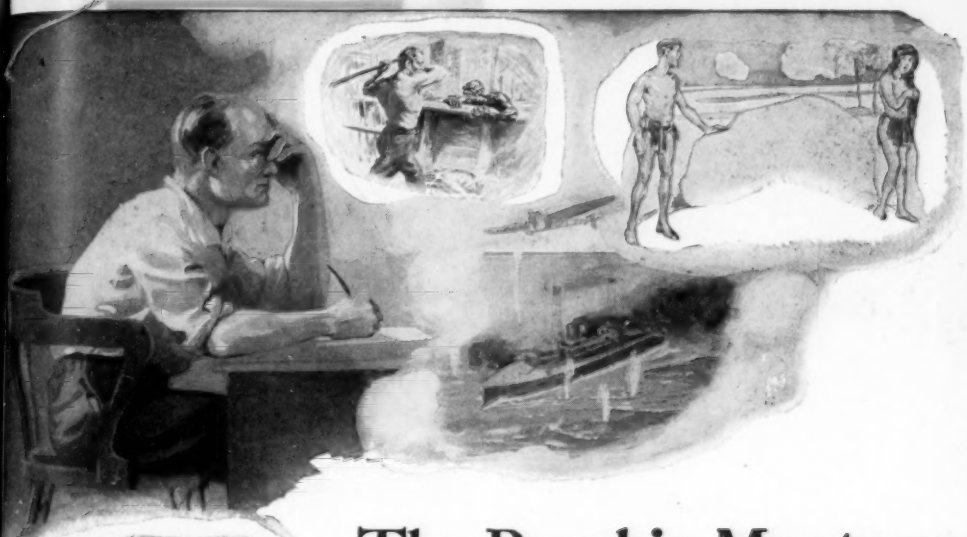

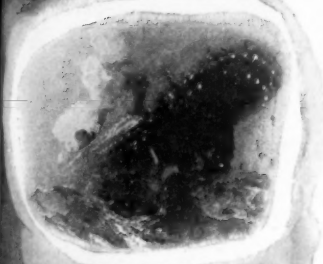

The Psychic Mystery of His Time

He believed that he was under the control of a spirit that had passed over the border; of a soul who, demanding earthly expression, had seized him as its instrument.

And, who can say that he was wrong?

He was without education; he had been a sailor, an odd-jobs man, a rolling stone; and when he was 36 years old there came the mysterious, irresistible impulse to write. At once he was famous. He wrote some of the most marvelous stories ever put on paper, in which the real blended with the unreal. With uncanny accuracy, he foretold the sinking of the Titanic, ten years before the ship went down, in a story that reads like a newspaper account of the actual happening. He invented the periscope, and foretold the use of the airship and submarine in modern warfare.

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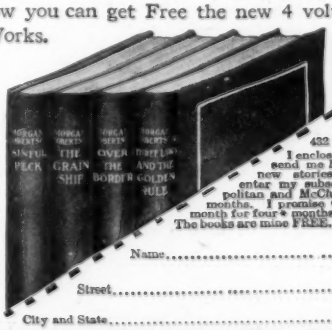

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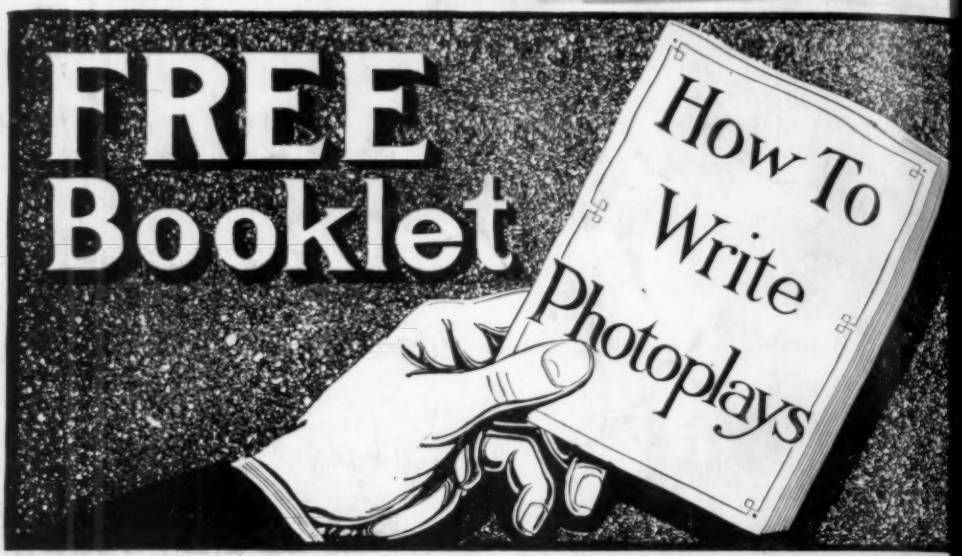

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Russell Sage said: "There is a common fallacy that, while for legal advice we go to lawyers, and for medical advice we go to physicians, and for the construction of a great work, to engineers—financing is everybody's business. As a matter of fact, *it is the most profound and complicated of them all.*"

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"I have never yet written you one word about my success with Sargol, but I feel I must do so now, and I cannot refrain from telling you that I am just delighted with the treatment, I am gaining so in every way, not only in weight but am feeling so much better and am looking so much better. I was simply starving before, but now my appetite is getting hearty, my complexion is wonderfully improved and only yesterday I was told that I looked ten years younger. I shall continue the treatment and never be without Sargol so long as it continues to improve my health and appearance, and am glad indeed that I have found it to be all that you recommended."

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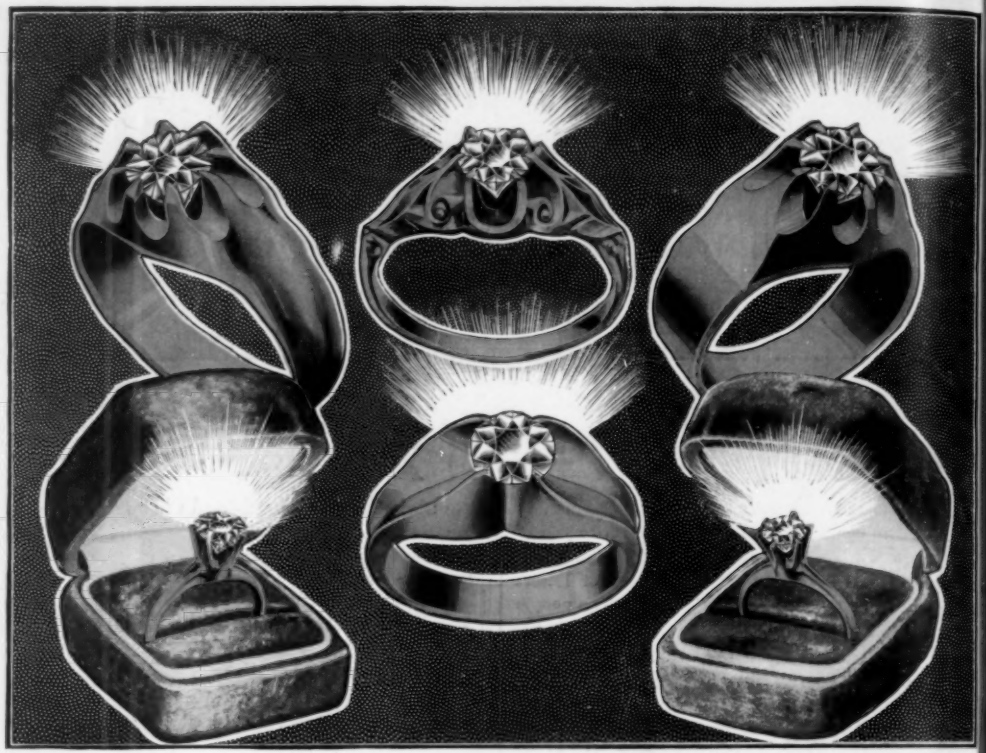

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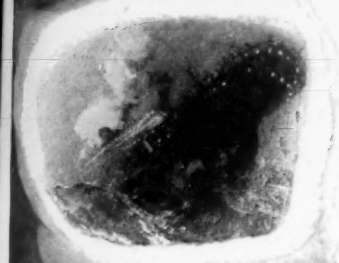

The Psychic Mystery of His Time

He believed that he was under the control of a spirit that had passed over the border; of a soul who, demanding earthly expression, had seized him as its instrument.

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He was without education; he had been a sailor, an odd-jobs man, a rolling stone; and when he was 36 years old there came the mysterious, irresistible impulse to write. At once he was famous. He wrote some of the most marvelous stories ever put on paper, in which the real blended with the unreal. With uncanny accuracy, he foretold the sinking of the Titanic, ten years before the ship went down, in a story that reads like a newspaper account of the actual happening. He invented the periscope, and foretold the use of the airship and submarine in modern warfare.

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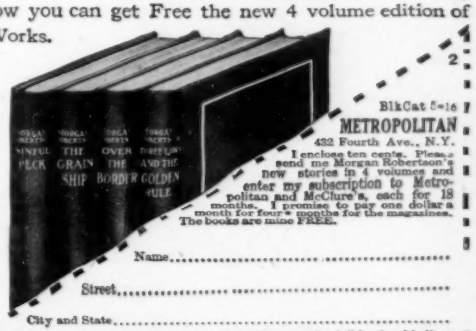
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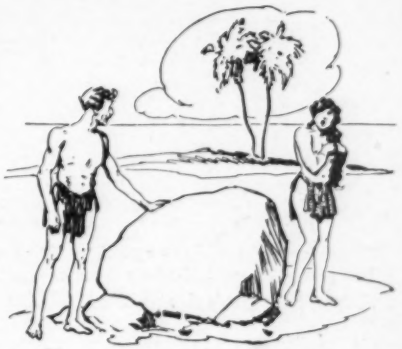

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